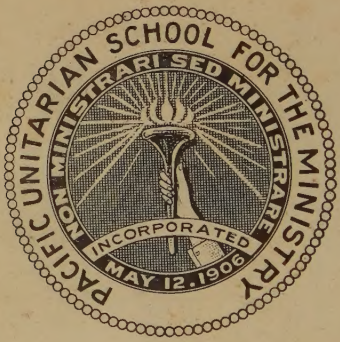
THE SIMPLE TRUTH

REV. ROBERT COLLYER



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THE SIMPLE TRUTH.

A HOME BOOK.

BY ROBERT COLLYER,

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TO THE MEMORY

OF

My Dear and Good Friend,

JOHN EARLE WILLIAMS

OF

IRVINGTON ON THE HUDSON.

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GROWING AGED TOGETHER.

"Mercifully ordain that we may grow aged together."

A Prayer of Tobit.

GROWING AGED TOGETHER.

I LOVE to turn now and then to that touching story in the Apocrypha, of the young man and woman who were just married and ready to start together on their untried career, and especially to notice how this was their first cry to Heaven when the wedding-guests had gone, and they were alone in their chamber: "Mercifully ordain that we may grow aged together."

The man had come a long way after his wife, and knew very little about her, except as her father had told him they were a good and honest stock. She was to go back with him, and live with him under the eye of her mother-in-law; and how the experiment would succeed, as the years swept on, he had of course no idea. His mother was a woman of very notable qualities. When her husband went blind once, she turned out and made the living with her spinning-wheel; and they were so delighted

with her work in one place, that they gave her a kid in addition to her day's wages. But when she brought it home, and her husband heard it bleating, he wanted to know where she got that kid. She told him it was a present, but he did not believe her. He said she had stolen it! Well, she could go out and work for him, but she could not and would not submit to a charge like that; so she turned on him, and gave him such a piece of her mind as I suppose he never forgot as long as he lived: and after this they got along very well until better days came, and there is no hint in the family history that she ever referred to the thing again. She had it out with him then and there, and made him ashamed of himself, no doubt. And then, as she knew he was a true man, and he knew she was a true woman, in the face of this grim convulsion, they did not rush into the divorce court, or threaten to do so; — he did not turn brute, or she vixen; the sky cleared when the storm was over, and never clouded up again. And how the story got out, I have no idea: perhaps the man told it, a long time after, against himself.

This young man was their one child, the pride and joy of their life; and this was the home into which he was to bring his wife. What would come of it, he could not tell. Whether she would settle kindly in the new place, or be all the time fretting after the home of her childhood; whether

such a woman as his mother was, and as his wife ought to be, could so blend their supremacy as to make one music as before, instead of a discord that would make him rue the day he brought them togther, like the elements in a galvanic battery. All this was unknown to him; but he knelt down with her, and prayed, "Mercifully ordain that we may grow aged together."

It was one of those weddings, too, for which we sometimes predict a leisurely repentance, — love at first sight, followed by very brief courtship, and then the wedding, friends' congratulations, kisses, tears, laughter, and a supper, which they ate, no doubt, looking shyly at each other, and wondering whether it could be possible they were husband and wife. Was it a dream that had come true, or only a dream; a drama, or that out of which all dramas are made; a mirage of sun and mist on the horizon of their life, or the essence and substance of realities? Poor things! they were both quite young; they did not know much of the world they had lived in, and nothing at all of the world they were entering. Since they first met, it had been Eden unfallen, with the dew of heaven on it. Did they wonder whether a brief space would find them outside their Eden, in among the thorns and briers, with a flaming sword at the gates, forbidding their return? I can only wonder: I cannot tell; but this is worth more than all such surmise, —

they knelt down together, in the still, sweet sanctity of their chamber, with the light of Eden on their faces, with its sweetness and purity like an atmosphere about them; and then the man prayed, and the woman said Amen to this prayer.

It was natural also, that, coming together as they did, they should know very little of each other in regard to those details of the life before them, on which so very much must depend in the course of time. There was a story in their sacred books about a fore-elder who had made just such a match as this, and it didn't turn out well at all. They were unrelated souls; and as time went on, it revealed the difference so fatally, that when he was an old man, and blind, she practised on him a gross deception, to gain a blessing for her favorite son, he had meant to bestow on his own. They may have thought of this, and wondered whether their trust in each other would ever come to such an end as that. He had swept suddenly into the circle of her life, — a fine, stalwart fellow, filling up the picture she had in her heart of the man she would marry. But she really knew no more about him than he knew about her. Could he hold his own as bread-winner, and she as bread-maker? Could he keep a home over her head, and could she make it bright and trim, as a man loves to see his home when he comes in tired, and wants to rest? Would he turn out selfish or self-forgetful,

or she a frivolous gossip, or a woman he could trust like his own soul? Would the sunshine break out in his face as he entered his own door, and meet the sunshine breaking out on hers? Would she cry, "Husband, here's your slippers: little Anna has been toasting them this half-hour;" and he reply, "Ah, wife! you're the woman to think of a man. Where are the children?" Or would he save all his snarls until he had shut the door, and sat down to supper, and she gave him back his own with usury? There it all lay before them, — the vast, unknown possibility, leading to heaven or to hell by the time they got to their silver wedding. There was but one wish resting in their hearts, come what would, — resting there as the lark, in my old home-land, rests among the heather; and then it soared, as the lark soars, singing into heaven; and this was the burden of their spring-time melody, —"Mercifully ordain that we may grow aged together."

Still we have to see how this cry would be of no more use then than it is now sometimes, if it did not stand through all the time to come, at once as a safeguard and an inspiration, — a safeguard against some things that prevent our growing aged together, and an inspiration to some that help us. It was a natural and most beautiful longing just then voicing itself out of their pure hearts' love. They felt sure they had been made for each other; and while they

knew that time must turn the raven to white, furrow the brow, blench the bloom, and touch all their faculties with its wintry frost, if they should live, still they wanted the good God to deal them out an even measure *together*. This seems to me to be the binding word of the whole story; together then as now, in the autumn as in the spring, in taking as in giving, — until they were borne away, not far apart, into the life to come.

But touching the most outward things of our life, I can see a danger, if they do not take care, that their prayer will not and can not be answered. They may both grow aged, that may be as God ordains; and they may live together while their life lasts, that must be as they ordain: yet this day may be, for all that, the end of their equality in age. For if he were one of those men we have all known, whose life and soul is given over to business, who rise early and sit up late, and work like galley-slaves to make a fortune, and she were one of those women who take life easy, and run no risks, he might be a broken-down old man with a fortune, while she was still young enough to enjoy it. Or if he had a secret vice, such as keeping ice-water on the side-board, and a sample-room in the closet, or any other of those subtle and dangerous devils that are always watching for a chance to drag a man down, while she held her life sweet and pure and true, then, long before their silver wedding, he

may be in his grave, or be fit for very little out of it; an old man in mid-age, with the warning finger of paralysis on his shoulder, or the splints of inflammatory rheumatism in his marrow, — a broken man she has to nurse like a fretful child. Or if she, poor girl, is beginning this wedded life, as so many of our girls do, without the fine sturdy womanhood of the open air, with a bloom on her blessed face like that you see on the blossoms in a hot-house, while he has in him the strong vitality of the desert and the hills, then, by the time she has borne those six sons we hear of afterward, she will have aged two years to his one. I know, if he has a man's heart in his breast, he will love her and cherish her all the more for her lost beauty and broken health; and some blessing may be found in this altered relation which might never have come to their perfect equality. But this is not the real kernel of the question. This blended being of the man and woman is, first of all, a piece of exquisite mechanism, ordained of heaven for a certain work on this earth; and it is the first condition of it, that all the arms of its power shall be equal to their design. Now, where this power fails by our folly, on either side, the thing in that shape is past praying for: we can only pray then for power and grace to make the best of it; and, thank God, that prayer can always be answered. So I hope, when they cried, "Mercifully ordain that we may grow aged together," this out-

ward condition of equality in health and strength was there in their nature ; or they might as well pray that the wheels of a watch, one half pewter and the other half steel, might be of equal endurance and worth.

And so to-day, if young men are not honest and wholesome clean through, and if young women will not train themselves to the finest and sturdiest womanhood possible to their nature ; if they will not eat brown bread, and work in the garden — if they have one — with some more grip than a bird scratching, and quit reading novels in a hot room, and devouring sweetmeats ; if they dare not face the sun and wind, and try to out-walk, ay, and out-run their brothers, and let our wise mother Nature buckle their belt, — they had not better say Amen when the stalwart young husband cries, "Mercifully ordain that we may grow aged together."

This, however, is the most outward condition ; reaching inward, we find others more delicate and divine. These young people have now to find each other out, and they may spend a lifetime in doing that. Some married folks find each other out, as I have read of mariners finding out the polar world. They leave the shores of their single life in the spring days, with tears and benedictions, sail on a while in sunshine and fair weather, and then find their way little by little into the cold latitudes, where they see the sun sink day by day, and feel the frost

creep in, until they give up at last, and turn to ice sitting at the same table.

Others, again, find each other out as we have been finding out this continent. They nestle down at first among the meadows, close by the clear streams; then they go on through a belt of shadow, lose their way, and find it again the best they know, and come out into a larger horizon and a better land; they meet their difficult hills, and climb them together, strike deserts and dismal places, and cross them together; and so at last they stand on the further reaches of the mountains, and see the other ocean sunning itself sweet and still, and then their journey ends. But through shadows and shine, this is the gospel for the day: they keep *together* right on to the end. They allow no danger, disaster, or difference to divide them, and no third person to interfere; for if they do it may be as if William and Mary of England had permitted the great Louis to divide their throne by first dividing their hearts.

Did you ever hear my definition of marriage? A wise and witty man[1] says: "It resembles a pair of shears, so joined that they cannot be separated; often moving in opposite directions, yet always punishing any one who comes between them." The definition is as witty as it is wise; and he might have added, Part the shears, and then all you have left is two poor daggers.

[1] Sydney Smith.

So it is possible we may grow aged in finding each other out, and wondering why we never saw that trait before, or struck that temper; but if there be between us a true heart, *if the rivet holds*, then the added years will only bring added reasons for a perfect union, and the sweet old ballad will be our psalm of life: —

"John Anderson, my Jo, John,
We clamb the hill togither;
And many a canty day, John,
We've had wi' ane anither;
Now we maun toddle down, John,
But hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep together at the foot,
John Anderson, my Jo."

We must find each other out; and then it is possible that, like my mother's old shears, over which I used to ponder when I was a child, one side is greater, and the other, by consequence, less.

I found James Mott delighted, one evening when I went to call on him, because, while he was working in his garden, two men went by, and one said, "That is James Mott."—"And who is James Mott?"—"Why, don't you know? He is Lucretia Mott's husband." Now, James Mott was by no means a common man: with a lesser half, he would have seemed a great man; and he was great in his steady and perfect loyalty to truth and goodness. But his wife was the woman of a century,

while he was so noble and great of soul as to be glad and proud of her greatness, and at the same time he seemed all the greater for his worship, — a feat, I notice, few men are able to accomplish.

Audubon, our great naturalist, married a good, sweet woman ; and when she began to find him out, she found he would wander off a thousand miles in quest of a bird. She said "Amen!" and went with him, camped in the woods, lived in log huts and shanties on the frontier, anywhere to be with him. She entered into his enthusiasm, shared his labor, and counted all things but loss for the excellency of the glory of being Audubon's wife. When the children began to come to them, he had to wander off alone ; but he could not go into a valley so deep, or a wilderness so distant, that the light would not shine on him out of their windows. He knew exactly where he would find her, and how she would look ; for while, as Ruskin reminds us, the clouds are never twice alike, the sunshine is always familiar, and it was sunshine he saw when he looked homeward. So, if you have read his notes, you will remember how his heart breaks forth into singing in all sorts of unexpected places as he thinks of the wife and children waiting his return ; and in that way they lived their life until they dropped into the lap of God like mellow fruit. It was laid on the man to do this curious wild work. How the woman's heart yearned to have him home, we may

well imagine, and how gladly she would have given up some of his greatness to keep her children's father at her side : but she did not tell him so, if she was the woman I think she was ; and so she is changed into the same image, from glory to glory. Growing aged together in the body, they are touched now in the spirit with immortal youth.

The little idyl ends without telling us how the answer came to this cry on a wedding night, or whether it came at all as they expected and hoped. But that it did come in some good, sweet way, is certain ; for there is no word about a convulsion, and they have six sons. They move away, when the good wife is dead ; and after that we only see the man who lives, the neighbors believe, to be a hundred and twenty-seven. It makes little difference, that we do not know exactly how their life together ended. If they kept these safeguards, and followed this inspiration I have tried to touch, I know it was all right.

When Oberlin was eighty years old, and very infirm, climbing one of his native mountains one day, he was obliged to lean on the arm of a younger man, while his wife, who was still strong, walked by herself. Meeting one of his parishioners, the old man felt so awkward at his seeming lack of gallantry, that he insisted on stopping and telling just how it was : she could not lean on his arm, but she leaned on his heart all the same ; they had grown

aged together, but he had shot a little ahead; they must not think there was any other reason; it was as it always had been, only he was the weaker vessel now, and would his friend please say so when he happened to mention what he had seen? So it would be with these twain, in that far-away Eastern valley: they would keep together; and, when the arm failed, the heart would still abide in the old beautiful strength.

"And what did you see?" I said once to a friend who had been into the Lake country, and who, on his return, told me he had gone to Wordsworth's home. "I saw the old man," he said, "walking in the garden with his wife. They are both quite old, and he is almost blind; but they seemed just like sweethearts courting, they were so tender to each other, and attentive." Miss Martineau tells us the same story, with the additional particulars of a near neighbor, how the old wife would miss her husband, and trot out, and find him asleep perhaps in the sun, run for his hat, tend him and watch over him till he awoke; and so it was that when he died they made one grave deep enough for both, and when she died they were one, — one in the dust as they were one in heaven, and had been on earth for over forty years. The world came to Wordsworth at last, but the wife at first. "Worse and worse," Jeffrey said, when a new poem came out: "Better and better," said the wife. The world

might scoff; the wife believed. She was no Sarah to laugh at the angel of the Lord. What wonder, then, they were sweethearts still at threescore and ten?

So the wife of Thomas Carlyle, the woman with the brave blood of John old Knox coursing through her heart, upheld her husband through all weathers, proud of his strength, tender of his weakness, and never saying, "Thomas, pray do write so that people can understand you." His wild, weird words might puzzle her brain, but they were simple Saxon to her heart; and so when she died he had graven on her tomb, "For forty years she was the true and loving helpmate of her husband, and unweariedly forwarded him as none else could in all of worthy that he did or attempted."

And so this is a prayer we can all make to God on our wedding-day, and, if we will, on any day and every day after, and always find the answer in the cry. Is there danger that we shall make it hard for Heaven to answer us in the tale of the years, because we are using them up like a candle lighted at both ends? we can guard against that. Is there danger that while we may grow aged together in years, there still may be such a fatal difference of spirit and purpose that at threescore and ten we may merely be two old people who have found each other out, and in our knowledge have made shipwreck of our love? we can guard against that.

No man and woman ever cried out with their whole heart, "Mercifully ordain that we may grow aged together," who did not find well-springs in their dryest deserts, gleams of sunlight stealing through their darkest shadows, an arm of power for their most appalling steeps, and sunny resting-places all the way.

I think the average novel is making sad mischief in the average mind in its pictures of true love. It makes the tender glow and glamour which related natures feel when they meet, true love. It is no such thing: it is true passion, that is all; a blessed power purely and rightly used, but no more true love than those little hooks and tendrils we see in June, on a shooting vine, are the ripe clusters of October. For true love grows out of reverence and deference, loyalty and courtesy, good service given and taken, dark days and bright days, sorrow and joy. It is the fine essence of all we are *together*, and all we do. True passion comes first, true love last. "It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body;" and so it is written, "The first man is of the earth earthy, but the second man is the Lord from heaven."

SOFTLY.

STARR KING SCHOOL
FOR THE MINISTRY

"The children are tender: I will lead on softly."

JACOB TO ESAU.

SOFTLY.

It was one of the secrets of my craft, in the old days when I wanted to weld iron or work steel to a fine purpose, to begin gently. If I began, as all learners do, to strike my heaviest blows at the start, the iron would crumble instead of welding, or the steel would suffer under my hammer, so that when it came to be tempered it would "fly," as we used to say, and rob the thing I had made of its finest quality. It was the first condition of a good job to begin gently; in a moment or two I could come down with a firmer hand, and before I was through pour out all my might in a sturdy storm of blows; but, if I began with the storm at this kind of work, I ended, as a rule, with a wreck.

I notice the same principle as a rule in the great iron-mills. The reason why the Nasmyth hammer can come down so gently as just to crack an egg, and then can smite like a small earthquake, lies

in the need there is that there should be such a compass of power and gentleness within the same device. Take the gentleness out on the one hand, or the ponderous might on the other, and the thing fails of its completeness. The perfection lies in the blending; because the work this blind giant has to do is very much like that your good smith has to do, — to come down gently as a June shower, or to smite like a tornado, according to the need.

So you have noticed a skilful mechanic start a new machine, — a steam-engine in the factory, a locomotive on the track, or a sewing-machine in the living-room: it is no matter, he always begins gently. He may be ever so sure it is all right, and that all the parts are balanced perfectly: it is the first condition of keeping the balance true, that his machine shall not go tearing away at high pressure on the instant, but shall feel its way into the best it can do through a sort of separate intelligence it has managed to grasp by reason of its birth and breeding. It is the man's child in a sense, and he knows exactly what to do in order that it may do honor to his hand and brain. He must let this fine fruit of his life have time to find its way into a full action gently: so you notice he will ease a little here, and tighten a little there, just a thought, as he says with an exquisite fitness of the word to the deed, and so at last his work is well done.

I watched this principle again in a grand organ,

when they were building up and bringing out its harmonies. The skilful fellow who had that work to do did not start out by putting all the pipes in their places, pulling out all the stops, and then storming you with one crash of melody which would shake the church. I noticed he began gently with some of the finest chords, made those true, and then went on to others of a greater volume, and so wrought on to the end. Now and then I would sit for half an hour listening, and wondering at the gentle patience. I could not make out half the cadences, or see the use of half the trouble he took: he was using a fine spirit he had in his nature to detect the dissonance, while I went by the rule of thumb. I got so tired at last of the whole business, that I begged one day he would let the music out in one great flood. He did it to please me, but I was not pleased. The organ was not ready for such a revelation, and he knew that, of course; only ministers must have their own way sometimes when they are all wrong, and I had my way. But now, out of a gentle, patient touch, which never halts, and never loses its temper, this wonderful instrument has grown to be a perpetual delight.

You have noticed again, that in training a fine animal for good service the trainer begins gently. He smites the tiger with an iron bar, and cows him; but if he is a wise man he talks to his horse, allures him, courts him, and makes a friend of him.

It was imagined within my day, that to have a good horse you must *break* him. I notice the word is seldom used now: we do not break, we train. Only the most vicious are broken; and they end, as a rule, with a well-proven demonstration of the worthlessness of the plan. If they do not learn to love, but only to fear you, if on their bells is not written "Holiness to the Lord" in that true fashion which would please good Mr. Bergh, then the day is almost sure to come when they will break out in one superb dash of desperation, and make you feel with Balaam that there may be but one step between your tormented brute and death.

And so I love to note such things as these, as I watch the perpetual advent of little children into this life of ours, and wonder how we shall deal with them in the one wise way which will weld them, shall I say, to whatsoever things are true and lovely and of good report, start them to the surest purpose, or train them so as to bring out the whole power for good God has hidden in their nature. There must be one right way. I think this father of little children found it when he said, "The children are tender: I will lead them gently." They may seem crude as unwelded iron or unshapen steel, or mere machines, or little brutes; and there are men in the world who seem, by their action, to have some such notion of a child's nature, to their eternal shame. All the same if these hints from what is

so like and unlike are of any use, here is the principle at the very outset of our endeavor to make a man out of our man-child, and a woman out of our maid-child: they are tender, we must lead on softly. Solomon may slip in with his cruel maxim of, "Spare the rod, and spoil the child:" he has no business about my place while my children are tender. I can no more be hard on them than Jesus could. If I hurt them in this evil way, I hurt those who are of the kingdom of heaven. My gray hairs have brought me this wisdom (and woe is me, I should be so wise!), that the unpardonable sin is to be hard on a tender child. I do not know whether God forgives me: I know I do not forgive myself. They forget, I hope: I do not forget. No cut of the hand or the tongue ever fell from a true father on such a child, that failed to ache forever in the heart of the giver; and no such thing was ever done which was not a damage all round. I do not wonder the old grandsire is so gentle with the second generation. He will not tell you, or himself perhaps, how it is that he is so tender with these new buds on the tree of life. He is trying to make it up to them: poor man, it is all he can do now. He would fain recall some passages in his fatherhood, but that cannot be done; and so he chokes back the inextinguishable regret, and humbly tries to get even through the over-measure. My good old mother was something of a Spartan with her boys;

a very gentle Spartan, still now and then she would make stern work of it, for we were a rough lot. But it was wonderfully beautiful to see her in her old age spreading her wide motherly wings over the children of the new day: she could no more be hard on them, no matter what pranks they played, than your May sun can be hard on your May blossom. It was the return of the heart to the soft answer, the sweet submission to the better plan, the vision of the infinite worth of gentle ways with tender folk, the endeavor, unknown to herself, to ease her dear old heart of what little pain was there from the old days, — the feeling that she might perhaps have gone more softly once with those she had then in hand; and so I want no better nurse for those we have given back to God than the good old soul who could not quite see things in this light forty years ago.

For while I have likened this gentle dealing to things so remote that I might suggest to you, even by these uncouth parallels, how entirely wrong we are when we try any thing save gentleness with these tender natures, my instances fall far below the truth, the moment we remember that these children are not things at all we can turn out to pattern, but human beings, each one living to himself or herself, holding a secret we cannot fathom, possessing powers perhaps we cannot even guess at; our children after the flesh, God's children after

the spirit, but intrusted to our hands and to our homes, that, coming out of heaven with hints of the angels in them, they may go back when their time comes, as sealed saints.

Because, when we say that no two faces are alike, we can say with a far deeper reason, that no two natures are alike. The boy may be the image of his father; yet the life within them may be no more the same than if they had been born a thousand miles apart. We bend over these opening lives, and try to see our own image in them: it is not there. We detect a faculty, a turn, a temper, we know we never had. That holy spirit which watches us forever, selects and saves by a law we do not half understand; and so we do not understand these tender natures until we know what these powers are which are waking out of their sleep. So if we imagine the child is such an one as ourselves, we have plenty of room to blunder in dealing with him as we would be dealt by if we were in his place. Your son may be no more like you in some most vital thing than David was like Jesse.

Now, we always walk softly if we do not know our way, and that way lies through great shadows; and here is where the child differs from the machine. We know what the machine can do: we have no such knowledge of the child. My boy may have a faculty in possession of his nature, which in thirty years will be a benediction to the human family;

but to-day, through the overplus of its power compared with his other powers and his knowledge of the world he lives in, it may look like a vice to me, and may grow to be a vice, if I do not say, "The child is tender, I will lead on softly."

I will suppose he is born with an overplus of imagination, so that things appear to him as realities, which have no existence except as the magic light of that imagination has thrown a picture against the white surface of his world. And so I suddenly discover, as I imagine, that he is lying right and left; and then he gets, not a gentle guidance through which he can find the line at last between thoughts and things, but first a stern warning, and then what I call a good *sound* whipping. Many a minister has flogged his boy for this turn, when he ought to have flogged himself like one of the old hermits. Here is a case in which they are alike, but with a difference. The sire has been drawing on his imagination, time out of mind, for the matter of his sermons. The son has come honestly by the faculty, but he is not shrewd enough to see how far he can go without being found out. The rein lies on the neck of his power as yet, and so it carries him whither it will; and then perhaps the father even prays for him at the family altar, as if he were a son of perdition, and helps to make him one through such prayers. "Gently," I would say to such a man; "turn the lash the other way; pray for insight

and foresight: this may be a rare gift you do not understand. The loftiest poet that ever sang may be but a vaster liar by your base criterion."

We must take note that the children are tender also as we try to train them. My small daughter, speaking of a neighbor's child one day, said, "She is going to a cemetery now;" and then a little laugh went round the table at the curious trip of the tongue. But I said to myself, It may be so: who knows? These tender folk do go to the cemetery many a time through the school, or might as well be there for any chance at life they have after they come out of school. We could hardly light on a wiser or a better woman than dear old Mrs. Barbauld. Her hymns for infant minds still linger like a benediction; but she was so eager to make a remarkable man out of her little nephew, Charles Aikin, that she educated him out of his mind into idiocy.[1] So a great many good fathers and mothers, who would shrink from laying heavy burdens on the backs of their children, do not hesitate a moment about laying such burdens on the nerve and brain. They urge them on at their books, or permit the teachers to do it, until the poor young things lose more in wealth of life, and life's worth, than their education will ever pay for. Lead on softly, then, in these paths of learning. If your children want to rush ahead at a pace which will

[1] Mrs. Farrar's Recollections of Seventy Years.

leave them learned invalids, hold them back; a true education is not a long fever. Here and there a child may need to be urged on a little; but I frankly confess, that under the high pressure of our public schools I take the children's side in all their little plots to stay away a day from school when they have been hard at work for many days. I like to plot with them. Their success pleases me, more than their failure. If they will be frank, and bring the matter before the home tribunal, they can always be sure of one advocate who will plead their cause with a moving eloquence rooted in old memories of half-holidays that are written in letters of gold.

In the culture of the heart, also, we must lead on softly. I can no more believe that hard and cruel thoughts of God will be good for my children, than I can believe in hard and cruel words and blows. I have no doubt there are more so-called infidels made and confirmed to that end, by fathers who thought they were doing God service, than there are of any other type, especially among the cultivated classes. Such a course may have answered well enough for the father. He had got along, it may be, to where such thoughts could do him no great harm when they struck him. There was no such reality in them at any time as there is in what he does in the bank, or what he thinks as he watches the molten iron in the furnace. But, while this is theology to him, it is very often grim,

hard, real, biting torment, to the tender child. It shuts out heaven and opens hell to him; it is cruel, cruel, cruel, as the hissing and biting of serpents, to some delicate, small souls. I suffered more agony at one time in my childhood, when a revivalist got hold of me, and made me believe I might wake up in hell when I laid my poor little head on the pillow, tired to death of my fears, than from any other thing that ever struck me. There is the way to do a fatal mischief, the way the seeds of infidelity are sown in many a noble nature. It is simply the revolt at, the resistance to, and the rejection of, a God the nature is too large and sweet and tender to tolerate. If, in these early days, there is no day-star of a lovelier light, no dawning for the small bright soul of a better day, then there may be no chance for that soul to pass into the kingdom until it has passed out of the world. I had a very touching letter not long ago from an army officer away out on the frontier. He told me how he had gone through sore trouble for his soul's sake, but had somehow felt his way out of the great grim shadows into a sunny peace and rest. "I have little children," he said, "and I want them to be trained up within this better life and light from the start, but I am a poor hand to pray and teach them; I am not sure I can do it if I try; and so will you please send me some good little manual to help along out to the fort?" That good man has

got hold of the clew: those children will be led softly. The secret of the Lord is in the gentle, soldierly heart: they will rise up to call him blessed. There will be no revolt from the heaven which bends over those tender natures, no turning away from the infinite love, no terror of the eternal torment: their religion will be part and parcel of their very life.

And then, when we have done all this, I know of nothing better beside, than that we shall put the whole wealth of our endeavor back into the hands of God in the spirit of this prayer of Schiller's father for his son: —

"O God, thou knowest my poverty in good gifts for my son's inheritance. Graciously permit that even as the want of bread became to thy son's hunger-stricken flock in the wilderness the pledge of overflowing abundance, so likewise my darkness may in its sad extremity carry with it the measure of thy unfathomable light. And, because I cannot give to my son the least of blessings, do thou give the greatest; because in my hands there is not any thing, do thou pour out all things from thine. And this temple of a new-born spirit, which I cannot adorn even with earthly ornaments of dust and ashes, do thou irradiate with the celestial adornment of thy presence, and finally with that peace which passeth all understanding."

THE BURDEN OF AN OLD SONG.

"Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."

PAYNE.

THE BURDEN OF AN OLD SONG.

If preachers ever exhaust the Bible, so that they must find a new store of texts to preach from, I think this is sure to be one of them, "There is no place like home." In the heart of a grain of wheat the miller tells me there is one spot of a golden cast, which is the reason for a certain delicate golden hue, if you grind the wheat for bread, and if you sow it, there lies the germ of all the harvests. What that germ is to the grain, the home is to the man. Strip away the enfolding nurture, and bare him to the heart of his being, and there you find the golden spot which colors all, and is the living germ for harvests that are yet to be.

In my last journey to Europe I went through a part of Scotland, which seemed to me to be about as wild a land as one would wish to see, just rock and heather, with tumbling seas for a setting, and here and there a reach of green country on which,

with my vision of our wonderful prairies, I thought it was a pity a man should try to live. I have read since then the life of a man who was raised in that land, and the days do not seem long enough for time to sing its praises. The wild sea, and rocks, and heather are more to him than the fee-simple of the State of Illinois would be; and, canny Scot as he is, you feel all the time he would not make the exchange if he had the chance; because these wild lands were his home, and stay away down in his heart, he can leave them no more than he can leave his own soul. And there was one boy in our hamlet, of my own age, who came up from his birth in the poor-house. I went there, when I was over, to see some of the old inmates; and, asking after this boy, they told me how he had risen in the world, had been there to see them, and had gone over the dismal old building with a most tender and moving interest. And so it is, I suppose, with us all. It is no matter how forbidding the land may be, or how hard the lot, or how unwilling we may be, after many years, to go back there and stay: there is no place like that first home. We seem to be tethered to it still, when we live on the other side of the world. Those are white days, when in our childhood we can rush away and see the world which lies beyond the line, where the hills touch the sky, and then come back to the old nest; but I doubt whether any days are ever so dark again as

those we have to live through when we leave home for good, and know that the old life is over. And white days when we can eat at another table, and wonder how it is our mother does not make things taste so good as those do they give us there; but when our mother has done with us, and the bread of strangers is the staff of our life, we wonder again whether anybody ever will make things taste so good as those she gave us in the old time. Indeed, I have known men well on in life hold stoutly to the idea that their wives fell far short of their mothers in this matter, and, if the dear old soul was still in the world, had to go home in order to get over their dream, and then, if they were men of grace, to come back perhaps, and say, "Well, wife, I do think, after all, that the bread which deserves to take the first prize is this in which you have hidden your own wedding-ring."

I notice this far-reaching love for the old home does not depend, as a rule, again, on the way in which those who raise us are bound by the Scripture, "Train up a child in the way he should go;" because in that case the chances are, they will make the sad mistake of thinking a good deal more of the way than they do of the child. And then to this mistake they bring another. They fix their minds on the other end, instead of the hither end of the way, and train up the child for what they think he ought to be at forty, rather than for what

he is anywhere between four and fourteen. So it falls out very often, that those children who have been subjected to the most thorough training all through their childhood turn out a shame to their kinsfolk, go directly in the face of all this training, and, when they once get away from home, think of it with the least affection. The truth is, in such a case, they have made havoc of the child, in order to make a man, and tried to force that to a speedy head which Nature has determined shall only round and ripen in the large leisure of the spring and summer of our life; and, then when they are through, those God gave them for all sweet and noble ends feel they have been cheated out of their childhood, so they do not love that which has never been truly revealed to them; and, having been cheated out of the kindly and wholesome joy of the years that come once and no more, they are like young horses that have been held in by a cruel bit: once let them get the bit between their teeth, or slip out of the bridle, and they will plunge on like mad things, careless of consequences in the measure of the strength and fire which is hidden all the time in their nature.

That grand Scotchman I mentioned just now[1] was a minister, so was his father and grandfather, and all Presbyterians; but it is simply wonderful to notice how the ideal of such a minister's home has

[1] Norman Macleod.

changed for the worse, as I think, if the children are to think of it in the next century as the dearest place on earth. The grandsire was the father of sixteen children, so there was enough to do in the way of tending and training in a poor highland parish. But on a winter's night the minister would get out his fiddle, bid the boys put away their books, and the girls their sewing, strike up a swinging Scotch reel, and set them dancing to his music; and then, when they were through, they had family prayer. Think for a moment of such a scene as that in the habitation of your Presbyterian ministers here in the North-West, or, for that matter, anywhere in America. Yet I doubt whether a nobler man ever lived in the highlands than that good old country parson. So it was in a fair measure in the home in which this lad himself was trained. There is a wide sky above it, and a warm atmosphere within, plenty of freedom between task and task, plenty of room for the tender roots of childhood to strike down into the interstices of the mass of hard reality, and to find nurture as the vines find it among the rocks that have been enriched with fine mould. "Only two things," the man said long after, "my father and mother tried to instil into us, and these were truth and love. They had no cranks or twists or crotchets or isms. When the time came for my father to give us a good blowing-up, we got it; but he made no fuss about trifles or failures or in-

firmities." And so it was, that, when this man came to be a leader among men, his heart went back to the old home among the wild hills and seas. A great sunny, catholic heart, touched to its fine perfection in that nest where, as he says again, "Christianity was taken for granted, and never forced on us with a scowl or a frown; where the good old Catholic priest would always come with his troubles, and be sure to find counsel and sympathy, and where he always staid as a most honored guest in his visitations to that side of his great rambling parish." The boys fitted up the attic for a sort of home theatre; and this one was the leader in the play, to which the family came in state. They tumbled round in the wild waters, and wandered away after wild things on the moors, and climbed the rocks at the risk of all their bones. But still the strong old home held them to its heart; and that grace touched them which is not at all this hectic fever with which small souls are badgered now under the guise of getting religion, but love and truth, and a heart open to heaven in the most natural, therefore the most beautiful way. So the boy grew to be a most noble man; and when he died, he gave commandment concerning his bones, and was buried close to the old nest, with the wild hills for sentinels about his grave.

When we say, then, there is no place like home, it is wise to see what we mean by such an axiom.

The home may be but a better sort of prison, a house of bondage, or a mere meeting-house with short intervals between long services, or something equally wide of the mark; but then it is not a home. And we may think, as we strive to do our duty by our children in some ruthless way which robs their childhood of its purest joy, that they will rise up to call us blessed when they see the end of all our labor; but this is just what they will not do: the judgment day is sure to come when we stand or fall by what is written, or is not written, in the book of the life of our boys and girls. John Mill had this ruthless way with his boy, John Stuart Mill: he would make a great man of him. He made the man, but he lost the child because he let him have no due childhood; and there is no sadder strain to me in modern biography than the condemnation which is never quite uttered, but is always felt, in the story of this great man's life. It is the resentment of a soul robbed of its birthright to the joy which waits for us in the morning world. It is the same truth, again, in the life of Charles Dickens. The boy was robbed of his childhood, as it seems, through the general worthlessness of his father. He would fain have left this out, I trust, when he came to tell his own story, for those are still the noblest sons who will go backward, and cover their fathers' shame; but there was no way round it, and so with a sad sincerity the man has to tell the truth; and

there it stands, the instance of millions of unwritten lives of the same sunless quality which cast their shadows over old men's graves. The same sad truth is revealed again in the autobiography of Harriet Martineau. I say again, then, the axiom waits on a condition. I may hope for a verdict of "not guilty" from any quarter sooner than from these boys and girls of mine, if I filch from them this one gift. They are that other self with which I cannot tamper; a projection of my conscience which has gone quite beyond my control: so they may stand on the crest-line of forty years, and say in their hearts, "My father wronged me: he robbed me of what is best in the best days I shall ever see."

But, if this is true of the shadow, it is true also of the light. No man need fear, or woman, that because their home is not ample, or the life of their children one of ease and plenty, they will not look back to the old place with infinite affection, if by all means in our power we let them have their childhood. We may have to face hard work and pinching times; but when we all face them together, let in all the sun there is anywhere about, and give it out of our hearts as well as take it out of the heavens, there can be but one issue, and that will be just the best we can long for.

The poor little fellow who came back to the work-house with his heart in his eyes had this one blessing, and no more, — all the love there was in

one very simple-minded woman, all the brightness that love could compass, and the better half of a dry crust; but thirty years after it was all over, and the arms which had held him were dust, the rusty little grate became as the censer which held the fire in the old days on God's altars, and the gaunt, bare building as the temple on Zion. I think, indeed, this love for the old home is very often deepest and purest in those who have had the hardest times: if we have fought through them in some bright, good way, and let the children have their childhood, it is not a sentiment then so much as the grain of our life. And we may think the children cannot understand it, or don't care: they can understand it, and they do care. The making of many a man has lain in the seeming failure of his poor striving father: it is not a matter of the mind, but of the instincts. We talk about chivalry: there never was a knight, since knighthood was heard of, who could answer to the cry of distress more bravely than that boy of yours who hears you tell sometimes how hard the world is on you, or who sits in his home with only "God and his mother." So wealth and ease, if we are not wise, may act as non-conductors to isolate us from these fine currents of feeling and sympathy on which young souls grow quick and tremulous, while poverty and striving may deepen and intensify this everlasting love. There were homes in this world thirty or forty years

ago, bare of all things but this one secret: they are the dearest places on earth to-day to men and women who have every thing they want. There are such homes now, with hard times and hard toil for their lot, but the children have their childhood, and the best chance there is at their bit of joy; and in forty years from now these will rank many a home on the avenues of our great cities in their wealth of loving memories.

I note again that this is not a hard problem to solve, or a lottery in which we may win or lose by a turn of the wheel of fortune. It is one of the simplest things in the world; and it is this, that to the children we shall maintain a childlike heart and mind. The way to rob children of their childhood, and bring them to say some day, "There is no place like home" in a very sad and bitter sense, as I have said before, is to have our grown-up theories all laid out in line and square for the mind, the heart, and the soul, and then cut away at the little things as if they were so many plants in an old Dutch garden. They must go to bed at such a minute by the clock, and rise at such a minute; go to bed in the dark perhaps, and never mind the ghosts, because we don't mind them: they have skipped us, it may be, through some mystery of grace, so that we never did care about them any more than a cast-steel anvil does; but that boy of mine may care very much, because the ghosts of

forty centuries have got themselves tangled in his delicate little brain. Then they must bathe to suit us, and eat to suit us, work at their books to suit us, and play to suit us, sit just so at the table and by the fireside, and be seen but not heard when there is company, be so far along in their studies by such a time, and conform strictly to our idea of the studies, and so on to the end of the long, dreary chapter. We allow no room for the free play of their own primitive nature; no headway or leeway we have not settled beforehand. If we are free-thinkers, they must be free-thinkers too; or, if we are Unitarians, we cannot imagine how they can be Catholics or Quakers. They must conform, in a word, to our ideas, though, in the marrow of our bones, we are nonconformists of the last distillation. Now, there never was a man in the world, worth his salt, who could look back to a childhood like this with a pure delight: the unfallen angel within him must bear witness against it forever. He may be so noble that a whisper of what he has lost shall never reach the world; he may hide it even from himself, and try to say it was all right: but for the world, if he is a man of sense and grace, he would not impose such a grown-up childhood on his own children. He knows what he has missed, and they must never know what he knows. So the open secret is this, I say, that we shall think more of the child than we do of the way, allow to

the uttermost for the primitive quality and intention of his nature; take note, above all things, of these tender and sensitive beings God has given into our hands, not to fit our theories, but to answer to his spirit. We must be childlike with them, which does not mean at all we shall be childish. They need guidance and correction, education and inspiration; but men and women of the simplest and kindliest turn, who withal are wise and strong, always do this best. What they do not need is to be made old in their youth, to grow to settled patterns, to be not children, but machines. "Woe unto that man who shall so offend one of these little ones! it were better that a millstone were hung about his neck, and he were cast into the depths of the sea," than that he should hang such a millstone about the necks of these free souls fresh from the heart of God.

If, again, we are faithful to the children in this simple, kindly way, this is what we may expect: that a good home now will create others like it in the time to come. Good homes are like good apple-trees, — they propagate after their kind. What you see in New England in one era, you see in Minnesota in another; and what you see in Cork and Connaught to-day, you see to-morrow on Goose Island, or on the patch skirting your town. When I make a home my children will love to think of in forty years, I make what they will have made

then out of their loving memory. If you could search out all the colonies which have swarmed from a place like Nantucket, you would be sure to find the same clean home-life you find there; with wider margins and more opulent tendencies, to be sure, but still the same organic life. And so it is everywhere and with us all. When we wonder, then, how the homes will look in which our children will live when we are dead, or think we would like to come back and look at them, if we are true to these simple lessons and laws, here is the glass: we just glance round our own home, and there we are. It will be about the same home we are looking at: they will be talking about us as we talk about those who have gone to their rest; they will have to fight the same battles, and to meet the same trials, — for one thing happeneth to all, — and the same old light will shine, and the same old joy pulse, through the place; the grand factor will be this we have now in our hand, and home will answer to home like the cups in a honeycomb; or, if things go harder with some of the children than they go with us, and they never realize such a home, still what we give them will bless them all their days: the vision will abide when the reality is lost, and the vision will be the diviner reality, because the *things* which are not *seen* are eternal. Howard Payne was living in a garret in Paris, on the edge of starvation; and there came to him a

vision of the old home; and he sang it out of his heart, and wist not what he was doing, never dreaming for an instant that what he learnt in suffering he should teach in song, and become immortal; but so it was. This burden came to him then, "There is no place like home;" and then, I suppose, he did not feel the hunger, or see the garret; and the tears would fall on the paper, and the hand would tremble, as he drew the picture after the pattern he had seen in the mount. The rivers ran flashing in the sun, the uplands were green again, the streets were peopled afresh, the old chimes of Trinity smote his heart, and within the vision there was one fireside, and voices and presences: he was in the old home again, and God made his cup run over.

Then, as the homes grow sacred, the land will grow sacred; for these are not one thing, and this another. You shall belt a land with fortresses, and she will still be as weak as Taunton Water if the homes are not fastnesses of a strong manhood; and build churches that will make the land glorious by their beauty, and "get up" revivals that shall fill them with devotees; yet if in your home there is not some such life as I have tried to open, if you raise your children to be slaves to an ism, the day will come when your religion will be little better than a fight of kites and crows. Ichabod will be written on the key-stone of the temples, and the Christ will weep again, and cry, "If thou hadst

known, even thou, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace."

But let us be sure of this, and then this land we live in will grow all sacred by reason of these true homes. One shall be salt with the spray of the Atlantic, and another of the Pacific; but they shall open into each other, and be one. Or one shall be falling back into ruins as you see them here and there in the New Hampshire wilderness, — the old folks dead and gone, the children moved away where a new home shall be growing to a larger and finer fitness, — but the long and touching tradition shall make the old home beautiful; the children's children will go back to hunt up the old cellar and the spring, to bring a blossom from the door-yard which has managed to fight the wilderness and hold its own until the right man comes to look for it in the light of the old days, and say to the strangers, "This was our place once: here was our hearth-stone, and yonder are our graves."

REFERRING BACK.

"The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn:
God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world!"

PIPPA PASSES.

REFERRING BACK.

I WANT in this chapter to tell what one of my children used to call "a truly story."

It came to me one day when I went on a pilgrimage to a huge old factory in the valley of the Washburne, in Yorkshire, in the summer of 1865. I wandered about in a kind of dream. The handful of people left there then were at work among the wheels and spindles, watching me between whiles; for strangers seldom came to that remote place, and I was clearly a stranger; and then, my dress was not what they were used to, especially my American "wide-awake." They were as strange to me as I was to them. There was not a face I knew, not one. And yet this was where I was once as well known to everybody as the child is to its own mother, and where I knew everybody as I knew my own kinsfolk; for it was here that I began my life, and lived it for a space that now

seems a lifetime all to itself. And this brings me to my dream.

I saw, in one of the great dusty rooms of the factory, a little fellow about eight years old, but big enough to pass for ten, working away from six o'clock in the morning till eight at night, tired sometimes almost to death, and then again not tired at all, rushing out when work was over, and, if it was winter, home to some treasure of a book. There were "Robinson Crusoe," and Bunyan's "Pilgrim," and Goldsmith's Histories of England and of Rome, the first volume of "Sandford and Merton," and one or two more that had something to do with theology; but it must have been meat for strong men, for not one of the brood of children who read the stories, and the Goldsmith that was just as good as stories, would ever touch these others after one or two trials.

One of these books that used to lead all boys captive in those good old days, this boy I saw in my dream would hug up close to his bowl of porridge, and eat and read; and then would read after he had done eating, while ever the careful house-mother would allow a candle or a coal. But if it was summer, the books would be neglected, and the rush would be out into the fields and lanes, hunting in the early summer for birds' nests, the tender and holy home canon would never permit to be robbed, and it was always obeyed; or,

in the later summer, seeing whether the sloes were turning ever so little from green to black, or whether the crabs (of the wood, not the water) were vulnerable to a boy's sharp and resolute teeth, and when the hazel-nuts would be out of that milky state at which it would be of any use to pluck them, and what was the prospect for hips and haws.

The men who profess to know just how we are made, as a watchmaker knows a watch, tell us that once in seven years we get a brand-new body; that the old things pass away in that time, and all things become new. I wonder sometimes if it is not so with our life. Is not *that* new as well as the frame? There I was that day, a gray-haired minister from a city which had been born and had come to its great place since the small lad began to work in the old mill as I saw him at the end of a vista of four and thirty years.

I watched him with a most pathetic interest. "Dear little chap," I said, "you had a hard time; but then it was a good time, too,—wasn't it, now? How good bread and butter did taste, to be sure, when half a pound of butter a week had to be divided among eight of us, and the white wheaten bread saved for Sunday! Did ever a flower in this world beside smell as good as the primrose, or prima donna sing like the sky-lark and throstle? Money cannot buy such a Christmas-pudding, or tears or prayers such a Christmas-tide, as the

mother made and the Lord gave when you and the world were young. Seven years you stuck to the old mill, and then you were only fifteen; and then, just as they were crowning the Queen, you know, you had to give it up, and to give the home up with it; to go out, and never return to stay. And so I lost sight of you out of that hard but blessed life in and out of the factory, and have never set eyes on you until to-day, — you dear little other one, that was dead and is alive again, was lost and is found." That was how I came to think of my story, and how I might tell it as a word of encouragement to many who may need such a word, about the way of life which I have travelled many miles since I set out, not knowing whither I went, to the pulpit and pastorate of Unity Church.

But I cannot tell the story I want to tell, if I let myself drift away just here from the boy in the mill on the Washburne, and say no more about him. I like him well enough, after all these years, to stay beside him a little longer; and, beside this, he had a great deal to do with the making of as much of a man as is now at the other end of this pen. I notice in Bunyan's "Pilgrim," how all the characters that great dreamer creates are so far hardened in the mould before he lets us see them, that we feel all the time it is a foregone conclusion. Obstinate, Pliable, Ignorance, and the rest on that side, are bound to come to grief; while Christian,

Hopeful, and Faithful are sure to reach the Shining City, no matter what may befall. Something like this is true of our common life. Before we begin to live to much purpose anyway, the things are gathered and laid up that are to make or mar us. We are not aware of it, any more than the young birds, as they flutter out of the nest to do for themselves, are aware how they will be sure to find out when to go North or South, and how to build and line their own nests, and where and what to seek for their callow brood. But it is all there. Nature has taken care of that; and Nature and Providence do together for the fledging child what Nature alone does for the bird. I have heard that the nuns who teach in convent schools say, "Let us have the Protestant child until it is seven years old, and then we have no fear for the future: it is sure to come at last into the Church." I imagine as a rule, this is true; and usually, when Protestant parents pay for the education of their children in those schools, they pay for an item that is not in the bill, — their conversion to Romanism. It has been noticed, too, how when German children come here from the Fatherland, and eagerly turn to the English tongue, giving up their native speech, it is no matter how long they live in that habit, if the old man, who has not spoken a word of German since he was a child, loses himself in his last moments, he then goes back to the other

self, — the fellow of the one I saw in the old mill, — and talks German again. So the poor old knight whose life as a man had been one great, gluttonous sin, forgot for a moment on his death-bed his own awful remorse, and the blasting of his hopes by the breath of the king, and babbled of green fields where he had wandered, no doubt, as an unfallen child, to gather king-cups and daisies, and chase the rabbit to its burrow.

That grand and hearty Englishman, Sydney Smith, used to laugh at ancestral pride, and to say the Smith crest, with which all their letters were sealed, was the Smith thumb. I cannot laugh with the lord of laughter there. I would be glad to know that I came of a great line, if it had been God's will.

About a year ago, there was a paragraph in the papers, of a murder in San Francisco, I read again and again with a wonderful interest. Col. Fairfax, so the papers said, had been stabbed in the streets of that city, by some wretch, for a fancied injury. The murdered man had strength enough left to draw his revolver, and cover his assassin, who then begged abjectly for mercy; when the dying victim said quietly, "You have killed me, and I can kill you; but I spare you, villain and coward as you are, for the sake of your wife and little children." If I were not myself, I would love to be the Fairfax who should succeed that noble fellow, not alone

for the splendid piece of chivalry, of which there was never more need than there is now, — the grace, I mean, of forbearance unto death in the face of the worst injury one man can inflict on another; not for this alone, but because that man was the last of a mighty line, whose name was the pride of all the boys of my companionship, and whose great mansion once nestled on the southern and sunny side of the high land which gave us only its northern shoulder. We were proud of the Fairfax line. It had disappeared from the country many a year before I was born; but the tradition was strong of the great Sir Thomas, who fought with Cromwell for the people against the king. And we preserved one tradition of him, how his arm was so long, that, when he stood stretched to his full height, the palm of the hand rested on the cap of the knee; and in some skirmish, also unrecorded, when our hero was met alone in one of our narrow lanes by eight or ten of the enemy, and it was one down and another come up, — Sir Thomas, by favor of his long arm and stout heart, cut down about half the number; and the rest galloped away. That Fairfax was a great figure in our juvenile Valhalla. He was one of a line of noble men, with a few exceptions, which had housed itself there at Denton for many hundreds of years. It saw good reason finally for settling in Virginia; gave a great friend to Washington, but not to the infant Republic; and

so came down to the man murdered on the Pacific coast. Pride in an ancestry like this, it must be good to feel. I think that man remembered he was a Fairfax, and must not stain his name with murder for murder; and that had something to do with his noble forbearance. He must die like a Fairfax. Such persons bring with them into the world a vast advantage over the common run of us. Their organism is like the organ of a great maker, — something unique for its sweetness or strength; and the soul, like a great organist, makes a music that is all its own. I think we would all, please God, belong to a line like this. It is something still in our life, like the separate line of David, by which should be born, in the fulness of time, the greatest of all the figures in human history. But when that cannot be, what we may all be glad and proud of is a line that is good as far as it goes. This is the way I feel about the little man who was to worry out of that factory somehow into a pulpit. The line began with the father and mother. There was a grandfather who fought under Nelson, and went overboard, one black night, in a storm: he was on the father's side. And then, on the mother's side, there was another sailor, who went down the sea in a ship that never came up again. Then there were two widows who fought the wolf while they were able, and died presently of the fight.

Then, as the century was coming in, Yorkshire, with its great mills, began to be to the South of England what the Far West has been to the East here in our day, — the land of promise to all who wanted to better themselves. So a bright orphan-lad in London and a lass in Norwich heard of it, and were caught by that impulse to get out of the land of their kindred, which caught their son, many a year after, and swept him over the Atlantic; and I have no doubt, from what I have heard them say, they were after that quite of the mind of the old ballad: —

> "York, York, for my monie:
> Of all the places I ever did see,
> This is the best for good companie,
> Except the city of London."

So what a boy saw, when he began to notice, was a woman, tall and deep-chested, with shining flaxen hair, and laughing blue eyes, a damask rose-bloom on her cheek, — as is the way with the women of her nation, — a laugh that was music, too, and a contagion of laughter you could not escape was at the heart of it; a step like a deer for lightness, and an activity that could carry its possessor twenty miles a day over the rough northern hills, and land her safe home in the evening, no more tired than one of our fashionable ladies in Chicago would be in going from cellar to garret in her own home. Woman's rights, as a natural

truth, must have come to me by my mother. I believe, as I sit and think of her wonderful genius for doing whatever she took in hand, if she had been told to do it by her sense of duty, and then the way had opened, she would have led an army like the old queens, or governed a kingdom. What she did govern was a houseful of great, growing, hungry, out-breaking bairns, — keeping us all well in hand, smiting all hinderance out of our way, keeping us fed and clad bravely, and paying for school, as long as we could be spared to go, out of the eighteen shillings a week the quiet manful father made at his anvil. The kindest heart that ever beat in a man's breast, I think, was his. It stopped beating in a moment, one hot July day; and, before any hand could touch him, he was in "the rest that remains." But in those brave old days, while the first fifteen years were passing which do so much for us all, there we were all together in one of the sweetest cottage homes that ever nestled under green leaves in a green valley. There was a plum-tree, and a rose-tree, and wealth of ivy, and a bit of greensward, outside; and inside, one room on the floor, and two above; a floor of flags scoured white, so that you might eat your dinner on it, and no harm be done except to the floor; walls whitewashed to look like driven snow, with pictures of great Bible figures hung where there was room, and in their own places, kept so bright as to

be so many dusky mirrors; the great mahogany chest of drawers and high-cased clock; polished elm chairs, and corner cupboard for the china which was only got out at high festivals; a bright, open, sea-coal fire, always alight, winter and summer; with all sorts of common things for common use stowed away snug and tight in their own corners, like the goods and chattels of Ed'ard Cuttle, mariner. That was the home in the day of small things, when the world was young and the glory of life was in its first spring.

WILD LILIES.

"Consider the lilies of the field."

SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

WILD LILIES.

The commentators are a great deal troubled about the special flower Jesus had in his mind; but, when you follow them through the reports of travellers and missionaries, this seems to be the general conclusion, that in any case it was a wild flower. It is evident also, that there were then, as now, over there, a great many varieties of wild lilies, two of which are selected for special comment, — one hedged about with thorns so that you cannot reach it except at the risk of tearing your fingers; while the other grows among the wheat and barley, is looked on by the farmers with great disfavor, and is plucked up by the roots, bound into bundles, and burnt. One of these, it is imagined, was meant; and this may be the truth, while it is possible he did not mean this or that particular flower, but the whole wealth of wild lilies with which they were familiar. Here they were grow-

ing all about him in the woods and pastures, and among the corn; things of no account, if a gleam of beauty is of no account, and a touch of fragrance; wild, in the way very often, and mere weeds to be mown down with the briars, or plucked from among the growing wheat and burnt. But within the worthlessness he found a worth. These wild things also are of God, he says, and from God. Of no worth to you, they are of so much worth to him that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. You want them out of the way: He put them in the way, and loves what at the best you merely tolerate, or why should he have cast such a wealth of beauty and fragrance into their cups?

And we find the key to the lesson of the lilies, as we try to identify ourselves with the men and women to whom he was speaking that day. He was speaking to them about their life; and it was a life in which they would at the best be inclined to feel that they were of no great account. They were people who had to take hold of humble tasks to earn their bread, and to work at them with very scant encouragement. And there were hard times for them in those days, as there are in these,—worse, indeed, than any that we can well imagine; so that now and then they must have been quite fortunate if they did not feel they were rather in the way, and the world would be better without

them. They were more fortunate, also, than some are now, if they did not feel sometimes, that their poor obscure lot was, on the whole, about as good as they had any right to expect, because of a certain wild and weedy quality in their nature, out of which they could never hope to rise into any great worth, either to themselves or to the world about them. For there is only here and there a man who will not be content to take his hard fortune quietly, and will keep up a steady revolt against it, and look out for better days. To most men, and especially to those who are born to toil on a low plane where the chances for rising are hardly worth counting, it is about as it has been with your Saxon serf in England for a thousand years, — "a long mechanic pacing to and fro, a gray set life and apathetic end." And what can be more natural in such a case, than the dull and heavy feeling that you are of no more account to Heaven than you are to earth? — a thing to God as you are to man, in the way in the higher as in the lower life, and bound to take what comes, for this has all been settled where there is no appeal. It is not hard to realize that this was the kind of company over whose hard and poor lot the tender heart of Christ was yearning. He meets them on their own ground, and opens to them the lesson of the lilies. They are of no account, he says, — wild things, and in the way. They are mown down, and pulled up and consumed, and you think there is good riddance.

But now just look at the cup of that wild lily. Did any whiteness in the palace of Solomon, or any purple he ever wore, touch the pure splendor of those petals? Was any silk ever equal to their sheen, or fretted gold equal to that you will find in their heart, or any line of beauty man ever drew equal to the curve from the base to the edge of that cup, or any incense equal to their perfume? No man cares for them, but do you see how God cares? He gave them their beauty and sweetness, and maintains them in the world against all opposition, for he must and will have wild lilies.

And so you will see from this brief word of lilies first, and then of those to whom Jesus speaks, what a large and gracious meaning stays within his thought. For the beauty and worth of it, as of so much beside in his gospel, lies just here, that he does not seem to care either for the lilies or the lives on which the grace of God seems to be stamped so clearly that you have no doubt about it when you see them; but leaves these to speak for themselves, and takes up those that need such an advocate and interpreter before they can come home to us in their true worth.

Because this is the simple truth, that there was a great wealth of lilies in the world that day, which held in their cup the culture of all the centuries since God put man in a garden to dress it, — flowers about which men were busy, no doubt,

as they are now, selecting and arranging in orders of nobility, over which they were wondering, and singing praises because of their exceeding beauty and sweetness, and preserving with care in gardens and conservatories, as was fitting, to their minds, for plants of such rare worth; Lilies like that out of whose cup the sacred books in India say Brahma sprung, the oldest of all the sons of God; like those Layard found in the royal palaces of Nineveh; like that Sir Gardiner Wilkinson copied from the brow of an Egyptian beauty, where it hangs like a jewel; and like those Sir William Jones was treasuring in his room when a man came to see him from Nepaul, and, seeing the flowers, bowed before them first, as a devout Catholic bows before the host. Some such rare flower our divine Teacher might have brought to his discourse, and said to his hearers, "See this now, and tell me whether God has not revealed himself in all this beauty and worth." But these wild things with the thorns about them, on the skirts of Mount Tabor, or these others in the standing corn, lilies lurking in the meadow-grass, or haunting the marshes, and tossing their heads in the wind all over the land, of no great worth in any case, and usually in the way; wild things which had never been touched by culture, or made sacred in any way by the reverence of the centuries, but had just taken care of themselves, and, as sure as summer

came, had foamed over out of their hiding-places, so that those who wanted a land full of good green grass and corn would feel a good deal more like praying against them than bowing before them with the children of the far East, and be more ready to believe that the Evil One had hidden in their cups, than Brahma, the first incarnation, — how could he take these to his heart, and say such a sweet, good word about them, that human hearts had to treasure it, and write it in a Gospel, and send it down through all these ages as the word of God?

And, as he might have chosen his flowers, so he might have chosen his company, and been careful as we are often about narrowing his lessons of God's great regard down to those who might well be deemed most worthy. For, as there was a favored flower, so there was a favored class; and here, no doubt, he might have found instances of the worth of culture and fortune as proofs of the grace of God, as clear and conclusive as those he might have selected from the gardens and conservatories, — men and women of the rarest beauty and worth of life and character, about whose welcome there could be no doubt, whose place was assured, and whose loss to the world would leave a gap which, to men's minds, could never be filled; men and women of a distinct genius, whose sermons in the temple, or pleas at the bar, or cures in the hospital,

or creations in the finer arts, or histories, or poems, or stories, mark an era or create a school in the history and life of a nation; or who have such endowments of goodness or of valor, that they become saints and heroes by simply living out their lives. Very easy it would have been, no doubt, even in those barren and dismal days, to point out men and women who were the instances to the time of these noble orders; or, if there were none in life, there were plenty in history to which the noble heart of the nation would have responded at the mere mention of their names, from Abraham down to Zachariah who was slain between the temple and the altar. No doubt about the place those hold in the common estimation, any more than there is about the great names in the Poet's Corner at Westminster, or the crypt of St. Paul's in London; grand presences in the nation's history, whose names are written in the book of life. But here is what you might call a horde of common people, fishermen and herdsmen, peasants and publicans, persons of no account in the world, and of small account even to themselves, whose lot it was, perhaps, to draw their first breath in a home where they were not very welcome, to whom life from their youth had been a hard fight for the survival of the fittest, and who must be cut down and consumed, perhaps, by war or pestilence before they had a fair chance to open fully to the world, or be

hedged about by the thorns of evil circumstances; penned up in mean homes, so that they took to drink for what seemed like a glimpse of heaven to them in the very fires of hell, or were led into evil ways by the allurements of passions they had never been taught to curb and guide; wild things, making their way into life without leave or license, to leave it again, and make no sign; just to reveal a touch of beauty to those who had eyes to see it, and send some grain of sweetness from among the thorns, and then to pass away. And these were the men and women to whom Jesus said, "God cares for the wild things that are growing all about you; and are ye not much better than they?"

And when we leave them there about the mountain-side, and bring the truth home to our own life and the life of those about us, we can see what a divine wisdom there was in this turning away from the noblest and best, and touching those on whom the world looks with disdain and dislike for the lesson of God's grace. For the tendency of our time and of all time is to keep this grace in the gardens and conservatories of humanity, if I may say so, to the exclusion of the wilderness, and to believe in him as only revealed in the grandest and noblest natures, or, to use the term so common in our time, to those who have experienced a change of heart, while he cares nothing for those who can put forth no such claim, or looks on them with the

dislike the farmer feels toward the wild things that invade his crops in Syria. But the steady truth about all time and the vast preponderance of life is this: that while our reverence for a true nobility is the proof of a certain nobleness in our own nature, and we can never over-estimate the worth of it, or the proof it brings home to us of the divine presence in this world, yet it is, after all, but as the lilies that had grown to their high worth through centuries of care, in comparison with the wild things that were shedding their gleam of beauty and sweetness in the corn and over the pastures. And if this great mass of humanity, which may well include your life and mine, is to have no part or lot in God's love and care, then woe wofth the world, for it is, on the whole, a hideous and haggard failure!

For the truth you will find in a great city like this of ours is about as good, on the whole, as you will find anywhere; that an enormous majority are of no account except as they can reveal some gleam of beauty and breath of sweetness by being simply what they are, without any radical change at all, — not cultured or of a special genius, but of quite the common order, with a wild tang and tendency, very much in the way sometimes, compelled to make a hard fight for existence, cumbering the ground, if God wants the whole land this instant for corn and timothy, and wants no wild things about. Take this city for your instance, and you strike a rather high

average for the whole world, and for all time, often worse, seldom better. Here and there a man or woman of the noblest type, in whom the divine grace is not to be mistaken, with a touch of genius in them, or heroism, or a touch of pure goodness, caught perhaps, if we knew their secret, out of centuries of cultivation, — choice garden flowers, to whom a religious life in some true sense is as natural as singing is to a lark. And then, beside these, outside the fences of distinction, we put down this whole wild growth of us, in the shadow and in the sun, in the marshes and by the wayside, not very beautiful and not very sweet, except as with the good Christ you can make a large allowance, and see the touch of God's finger, where most of us are sand-blind to such revelation; the base things of this world, and the things that are despised, and the things that are not except as God has chosen them; wild things, that have to be got under sometimes in ruthless ways, or they would ruin the hope of the harvest, but which still hold a gleam of the divine grace in their heart, and a breath of the sweetness coming forth from God, though the whole Church say they are of the Devil, and going back to God as the sole heart that can understand them and take them in.

This is the large general truth; and then, within this, I find a truth which is more special and personal, which I do well to lay to my heart and to believe, — that, if I think I am of the garden, it will be a good

thing for me to look through the bars sometimes to those who are in the wilder reaches, as the Christ did, and consider them in the light of his gospel tenderly, and to remember that just as I exclude them from God's regard, I am unworthy the name Christian. He met such men and women frankly, and treated them with a divine regard, and would have them be true to their own better nature; and then he was content, because I suppose he understood how God had ordained wild things, and made room for them, and touched them with beauty and a fragrance of their own, and bid them occupy until he comes to bring in the nobler order, and the better day.

Or if I feel, as well I may, that there is a wild quality in my own nature and condition, and that I am of the wilderness rather than the garden, common and unnoted, in the way sometimes, and beset by the thorns of harsh and evil circumstances, and so disheartened at my poor, low place, and at the little I can do to amend things, let me think of these wild things in the pasture on Mount Tabor, with the thorns about them, and how they manage somehow, after all, to keep sweet about the heart, and to maintain the upward look, and the color which gleams like a glimpse of heaven; and then listen for the word of Christ, "Consider the lilies," and so believe that I am very near and very dear to God, when all is said and done; and I can do my

best, and be my best, can keep the touch of sweetness in my heart, and the upward look from among the thorns, and be patient and not over-troubled about what is going to happen to me, for the wilderness is God's land as certainly as the garden, and is better beyond all telling, even for wild things, than it could be as a blank desolation.

I am here for some true use, or I should not be here in the divine economy; and the one thing I know is that I must be my own true self, and then there will be a better for me, climbing always toward the best. The one thing I must not do is to grow sour and sad, and hang my head until it is soiled with the mud, or let the thorns have it all their own way; for how many men and women I have seen, who have lost their chance through this deliberate downward dip! and how many I have seen beset with thorns, obscure and of no account to the world, who were still sweet and good at the heart when you once got at them, with gleams of the very grace of heaven shining in and through them, wild witnesses for God in the thick of harsh and evil surroundings where he wants wild witnesses!

If I have those very dear to me, who take to wild ways while still, after all, as so often happens, there is a real native grace in them, and goodness; who can not and will not conform to the order of my home, or after all my care and pains will not

stay in my church, but take up with what seems to me to be a wild idea, in which, as I think, there can be no help to the soul, and so bring me trouble and dismay instead of the blessing I expected, — let me then consider the lilies, and God's hand in them, and his care for them, and sorrow not as those that have no hope. It is right that I should be true to my own light and my own nature, and look to those who are to me as my own life to be like me; but my nature may be one thing, and theirs quite another, and then all I can do is to help them to be and to do their best under the new order. How many children have been lost, who would have been saved if fathers and mothers had understood this secret of the new and wild variety, and made a large allowance for the difference they could not understand! — the sons of ministers, and members in good standing, and widowed mothers who were left to train them the best they knew; wild boys, but not wicked, the old Berserker blood afire again in their veins, plunging into the strong floods of life while the guardians believe only in the quiet eddies, — told sternly that this is all godless and the way to hell, until they believe it, but do not care, and then told of God's hatred until they hate in return, or sink into a blank and utter atheism. In no one thing I can ever encounter do I need so much this large look of Christ as when I have raised a wild boy, and

must still have the grace to make him believe in himself, and become the best he can be, and to believe that God cares for wild boys as he cares for wild lilies, and will still be with him to challenge him, and help him to master the thorns, and grow sweet and good through it all. Multitudes of men have been lost for the want of it, killing out the last germs of self-respect, and saying, "God has no place in his providence for such as you: your end is to be damned." We want the whole world we care for most, to be of the garden. It never has been so, and, until the whole race has risen into the better life, never can be. But, when those that are very near and dear to us take to these ways, we can do our best for them, and not break our hearts about it, when we believe with Jesus that God has a purpose for the children of the wilderness as surely as the children of the garden and the conservatory; that the noblest were wild once, and the wildest will grow noble at last through the divine grace and our own true endeavors.

And I must be sure of this finally, that this whole world is God's world, and all this pottering about the way in which he must stand related to us and we to him, because we believe certain dogmas and observe certain ordinances of this or that church, is time thrown away, except as it can result in making me a better man all round and all through; and I desire to speak in no narrow spirit when I say that

through these means of grace, as they are called, this does not often happen. It is the contact of the divine soul with our own, as the sun smites the lilies, and the rain and dew touch them from cup to root; the love of God shed abroad in the heart, as the Scripture says; and the love of God is the love of goodness. This is God's world; and as it stands to-day he needs men in it to run with a fire-engine, as certainly as he needs men to preach in pulpits, and set broken limbs; to do the rough work, as surely as the fine work. And as men are made they are pretty sure to take a tang from the nature of the work they have to do, or to bring one with them as the very condition of their taking hold; just as Esau was a wild man, and a hunter, and Jacob a very tame man, and kept sheep. This is God's world, and he needs all kinds, and will have them; and when we come to look on his world with this wide and gracious glance out of the heart of Christ, we shall not be over-troubled about what is going to happen to-morrow, if we manage to do our part to-day. It was in his hands before we came, and it will be in his hands when we have gone away; and his tender mercies are over all his works, and all his children.

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL.

"How many a father have I seen,
A sober man among his boys,
Whose youth was full of foolish noise,
Who wears his manhood hale and green!"

IN MEMORIAM.

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

THE human touches in the story of the prodigal make one feel sure of its essential reality. Jesus must have known the family, or heard of it in some near and neighborly way, so that all he had to do, I suppose, was to take this bit of nature and life for a key to open the truth, and urge home its lesson on those about him.

The young man lives in a kindly country-home, with his father, and an elder brother of another turn. There is no sign of a mother or sisters; and this at the first glance seems to be a great pity, and stirs the wonder whether the story in that case might not have taken another turn. It might, and then it might not: that would depend in part on the youth himself. If I want to have my fling at the swine-troughs, I shall either get it by breaking away openly from the pure and good women of my house, or by

trying to live two lives, — one clean and good in my home, the other unclean and evil in the dens of vice. This is what a great many young men do here in America, with as true a womanhood to guard and guide them as the world ever saw: so it is fair to infer, that, if this young man once made up his mind to do it, he would put himself down on the Devil's books in despite of the best women who ever blessed and sanctified a home.

The old father is clearly as good a man, in his own way, as you could well find; bound up in his boy, as Jacob was in Joseph. We can see this as we watch him open his heart to the poor wretch when he comes back, and take him in again without question or condition. Nothing can be more sweet and tender than his joy. There is no time now for even a glance of reproof: the best he has left is poured out on him without stint; the wardrobe is ransacked, and the jewel-box, the cellar, and the fold, to set forth the old man's gladness; neighbors and friends are called in, and music and dancing crown the holiday on which the dead has come to life again, and the lost is found. And as I watch him through the mists of time, standing there trembling all over with delight, I can imagine I hear him say to himself, "What a fool I have been! If I had made the old place as bright as this for my boy before he went away, he might never have gone: at any rate, it would have been well worth the trial."

For we can guess again, from the elder brother's wonder over the music and dancing as he draws near the house, that this was quite a new thing at the old farmstead; and I set no value on his reproach, "Thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends," because I conclude the last thing he would have thought of doing would be to give a feast and a dance. He was not that kind of young man at all, not he. From the day when he began to do chores, to this day when he flings his bitter rebuke, not minding who is hurt, father and son have plodded along, quite of one mind, prudent, careful, watching the main chance, and never thinking of fooling away their money and time in any such nonsense, while the young man of twenty-five was just as well fitted to be an elder in the synagogue as the elder of sixty.

And here, as I think, we come upon the first germ of the trouble and shame so far as the father and the home are to blame for it. It was a good home, no doubt, in its own quiet way, and he was a good father; but he made the mistake we can make now, of training two natures, quite unlike, under one law, and concluding that what had proven itself to be a safe and sure rule in his conduct touching the elder lad must be equally wise and good for the younger. A picnic now and then, with the members in good standing; a dinner, when the right time came round, to the rabbi and

his wife, at which they talked over church matters, and last Sunday's sermon if they had one, and sang the psalms of David for diversion, — these were about all the pleasures, I suspect, the old place ever knew; sugar to the senna in the young fellow's life, while all the time he would be apt to feel that the senna was the main ingredient in the cup, and was meant to "do him good." So, if the father had not been quite so good a man in one sense, he might have been better in another. He would have said then, "This boy of mine is not at all like his brother: he wants more life and motion, and he shall have them. He prefers a ballad to a psalm: he shall sing them to his heart's content. He is fond of the grace and glamour of the dance, and the company of young people of his own turn: I will flood the place with music for him on occasion, and he shall meet all the bright good girls and young men I can bring together in our own home, to which I will make it worth their while to come." Something like this the good man might have done; and then he would have had some chances he threw away, of keeping his boy clean and good. The first man in this case was of the earth earthy: he should have taken care, so far as he was able, it was good clean earth the boy would take to, and not gutters or marsh-mud.

And it was not to be expected, that in doing this he would have either help or sympathy from his

elder son, who had nothing in common with the young mischief who from his childhood had never been on hand when you wanted him, and was forever upsetting the fine order of the place, leaving the gates open, badgering beast and fowl, and tumbling out of fruit-trees at the peril of his bones. Their life would be one long fight. But the father should have had more sense, and made a fair allowance for this ingrain difference of the two natures, and said in his heart always, "There may be something very good, after all, in this wild boy of mine: I will try to find it, and bring it out, and begin by winning his confidence. All that I have shall be his also. We will be lads together. I will try to brighten my rusty, work-worn faculties for his sake, and enter into the spirit of his play. The Devil is waiting to take him with the guile of evil: I will be first in the field, please God, and take him with the guile of good." If the estate had been in such peril, he would have bent all his powers to save it: no care would have seemed too heavy, night or day. Yet here was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, a bright young soul, indeed, in the sorest peril; and it seems he could not leave the old ruts in which he had plodded so long, to pluck that soul as a brand from the burning.

And so the old parable forever fits the new time, and that home in Syria opens into yours and mine. Because my observation of life is not worth much

if this is not the truth, that there are hosts of fathers still, who watch and tend their investments with a great deal more care than they watch and tend their sons, and think more of making a fortune than they do of making a man. They come into our great cities from the rather austere life of the home on the hills or by the sea, with great brains and strong bodies, plunge into the tides of business which surge and swell about us; bring a wife from the old place, who has waited a little too long perhaps, while they were getting well started toward a fortune, and have about the average we hear about in this parable for a family; send the boy with a wild tang in him to some outlying school with ten dollars for pocket-money where he ought to have one; never weigh the deep difference be-between his nature and their own, or between their boyhood and his, or lay themselves out wisely to win his confidence, trying to be about fifteen to his twenty, or twenty to his fifteen, rambling away with him, sometimes into the country, walking with their arm over his shoulder, opening their own boyhood to him, counting no day perfect which has not brought them a little closer to the boy, and no gain in their ledger equal to this gain in the book of life.

Or we may try to do our best for such a boy, yet fail of our purpose because we do not understand how he can have such a keen hunger for a good time as he understands the term, and still

be a good fellow. So his home may be as good in its own way as any you will find: the best there is in the market on the table, all the standard books in the library, and a chamber fit for a prince. But does the boy want to hunt or fish, or go to the theatre or the opera, he must steal away to do it, and then tell a lie, perhaps, to cover his tracks; or want to go to a ball, he must feel this is about the same in his father's eyes as going to a burglary. We can make no greater blunder than to handle such boys and young men in this way. We ought to say, "This son of mine is not after my own heart at all; but he may be after the heart of an intrinsic goodness in some way I do not understand. He wants life and motion, stirring adventure, and all the sunshine there is on hand. I will give him his fling at the good as near as may be without the evil: he shall hunt and fish, and play billiards, if he will, in good company. I will get a table into the house, learn the play myself, and beat him if I can. I like the old books, he likes the new: he shall have the brightest and best they are writing. He loves the drama: he shall see the noblest and best plays, if he will, in the best company; and that may save him from what is mean and low if I throw no such safeguard about his life." I said just now there are young men who *will* take to evil courses, wallow in the filth, and drink the dregs of the cup of sin, no matter what you may do to save them; but

this is my conviction, that the vast majority of the bright, keen boys who go wrong, might be trained to a fair manhood if we would take note of the ingrain difference between them and their steady, sober brothers, whose life is duty, and their religion work. I cannot remember one instance within the circle of my own life, where fathers have shown this beautiful wisdom which turns back to its own youth for the sake of doing all that can be done for such boys, in which the result was a dead failure; while I do remember some sad instances in which boys of this make who have been kept down sternly, and denied every innocent amusement which was not approved by the sect, or would take time or money, breaking away into the wildest riot, spending all the time and money they could compass, and ruining themselves body and soul, for this life at any rate, when they could afford to defy the old man, and take their own way. Such youths are like the travellers we read about in the deserts, who, in their eagerness to drink, come to a mud-hole from which men who have plenty of clear spring water would turn away in disgust, but in that deadly thirst they plunge up to the neck with the asses and camels, and wallow in the pit with ineffable delight. We must let these bright, keen natures have their way, then, so long as we know it is a good way, on wide human lines. They will work well some day if they can play well now be-

tween whiles; satisfy their thirst at the spring, and they will loathe the mud-hole. Let them hunt, fish, dance, see brave sights, play strong games, hold honorable intercourse with young folks of their own clean breeding, spend half the money in teaching them to swim they may spend some day in sinking; and at twenty-five we may have a man who will be a joy to our failing years, where we might have had a broken wreck cast on a lee shore.

The Italians tell a story of a nobleman who grew sick of the world, and especially of the better half of it, and retired with his son, then an infant, to a castle in the mountains, where no girl or woman was ever allowed to come; and there the child grew to be a young man. Then his father ventured down with him to a festival at which among many other wonders he saw young girls; and with wide-open eyes he whispered to his father, "What are they?" — "They are devils, my son," the father answered, and thought, no doubt, he had made all safe. But as they got ready to go home he said, "What is there in the fair you would like?" He had seen a lassie of the hills, with a blush on her cheek like the Alpine rose, and eyes blue as the campanella, who had shot a glance at him, and slain him; and, "O father," he said, "I should so like that devil!" The story is not true, I suppose, in fact; but it is true as earth and heaven can make it of life, and most of all this life I have in my mind.

No use at all our crabbed and cranky wisdom, no use trying to turn these sweet, strong tides of life back upon themselves: as well try to arrest the rush up the Bay of Fundy. All we can do, and all we should do, is to find safe and clean channels for it, and so turn that to blessing which might else be the direst curse.

And, if you say this has nothing at all to do with the moral and religious training no man can afford to neglect, I answer, once for all, we must take our boys as we find them, and make the very best we can of them; and this is the one way to begin with such boys, end how we may. Of all things in the world, we should be careful how we handle them in this great matter, lest we disgust and repel them at the very portals of the palace of truth and the temple of God. The way a good many fathers try to instil these high lessons into such sons is very much as if in all their food and drink they hid some bitter herb. The noblest lessons can be taught so that they become at last an intimate part of the boy's life, while all this bright breezy work goes on I have tried to set forth, as we can see in such peerless books as "Tom Brown at Rugby," the best book, probably, we can put into the hands of such a boy, or read ourselves when we want to get the bearings of the work we have to do for him. For our wisdom does not lie in wrenching the eager young soul out of all its belongings, and so

making quite another sort of man: it lies in taking the temper and quality as we find it, and bringing these out at last into all fine uses of which the religious life is still the highest and the best. Absolute truth-telling can be instilled through all the play, and the soul of honesty and honor and helpfulness in time out of a tender heart, and reverence for whatsoever things are true and lovely and of good report, and the consciousness of the presence of God in his life, who can look with a loving glance on a boy at play as surely as on a man in a prayer-meeting, and does not count such time lost as the goody good books do; and the nearness and certainty of the heavens to which the young heart will turn now and then out of all the turmoil; and the Christ who could play as a child with children, and watch the innocent games of the youth of Galilee with no sour or sad glance, though by his nature he might have no part or lot in them. Let me raise my bright boy in such a good nurture as this, and when I am getting through with it all I shall surely expect to have a man I can be proud of, who has learned at last the great lesson how to make the best of his dangerous nature, and to turn what might have been a curse into unspeakable blessing; and no human being in the world will weep more tender tears over my grave, than the lad whose wild but wholesome ways are now turning my house upside down.

SLOW AND SURE.

"The evil cannot brook delay:
The good can well afford to wait."

SLOW AND SURE.

I HAVE been touched afresh through my summer leisure by the way in which Nature takes her time, and uses it so that not a moment seems to be lost, or to tread on the heels of the next. The bird sat on her nest in the door-yard in Keene, as if she was aware that the whole universe was circling about her small cup of sticks and straws, and was bound to keep faith with her in return for her fidelity, and bring out the brood; and up in Wisconsin the wild things in the woods and lanes turned to the sun, and took their time to ripen, as if they knew that all they had to do was just to hold on, to lose no instant and hasten none, and then, when their day came to fall or be gathered, all the beauty and worth of which they were capable would come to perfection, and the last day with them would justify all the rest.

I found that the wise old farmers also, who were

living near to Nature, and watching her ways, had caught this truth, and went about their business with some such trust in the leisurely result as the wild things of the earth and air. So they had no complaint to make in this rare year, especially of a frustrated purpose, and not much of any year. "Take things by and large," they said; "put the best there is in you into what you have to do; take care not to fuss and fume; and in the long run, if you are cut out for a farmer, you will have no cause to complain. But then you must be on hand, and keep abreast of the occasion: the last place in the world to make up for lost time is on a farm, or to get much ahead of time, or to win by a spasm what can only be won by all the leisure your things demand." Their thought was that Nature is no gambler to give you your winnings on a turn of the cards, but a steady sequence of seasons opening into duties as the plants in the floral clock of Linnæus opened to the sun. And as under the equator the rains pour down in cataracts to fill the Nile at length, and duly water each man's patch thousands of miles away, so the winds and waters and fires, whose springs are in the heart of a mystery no man can fathom, circle about the lands, and serve each man well who can fall into their harmony, and render service for service.

And so it was natural that one should think of some such quiet certainty within our life, wonder

how it is that in great cities especially we do not catch the secret of these steady laws, and so free ourselves in some fair measure from the fret and fever which make such havoc of the best we can be or do, — why we do not learn this lesson once for all, Nature teaches so kindly if we mind her, but so harshly if we neglect her, — that there is no juggling anywhere for those who will attain to a true success, no gambling, no short cuts, no haste, and no delay, when we once enter into the soul of things as God has made them, but just a wise and quiet persistence in the line of the law by which we have to live, ending, if not in fortune, then in character, which is still the noblest fortune; and that all this hectic haste to go ahead and be something or do something in advance of this slow and sure growth holds in itself the seeds of disaster, as all the wild nuts and plums I found, which seemed to be ripening before their time, had a worm in them somewhere, and the old man's corn, which had no business to be growing on the thin upland, withered in July, and had to be cut for fodder.

For when it seems as if our life gave the lie to this great truth that all things must have their time, and the best grow slowest, it is but mere seeming, which vanishes when we once touch the law. It seems as if men like Horace Greeley and our poet Whittier were in some way special instances of a divine Providence, separate and singular instances

of what is bound in heaven apart from what is bound on earth, born in this high sense, like Melchizedek, without father and mother, and without descent; with no closer kinship to the life of the homely race from which they sprang, than a flower tossed out of paradise might have to our earth-bound gardens. But they were of that splendid stock, which, after fighting through such stern ordeals as the siege of Derry, came and intrenched itself in the wilds of New Hampshire, of which the great majority among the original emigrants could read and write when this among men of their condition was the exception, rather than the rule; men and women who chose for their first minister one who, when they were threatened by the Indians, used to go into the pulpit with a musket in his hand, set it in the corner, and then whisper through the sabbath silence, "Let us pray;" and for their second Matthew Clark, also an old warrior, who could never attend to any thing human or divine, when the young rogues would bring a drum along, and beat the martial music, but must answer to it like an old war-horse; and who said, talking of St. Peter, "What was the use cutting off the man's ear in defence of the Lord? Why did he not cut him down, and be done with him?" Men of such a make also as John Stark, who, in ten minutes after the news of the fight at Lexington, had struck the hills, stopped his saw-mill, and galloped away, leaving word for the

rest to hurry up, which they did to such a purpose that in his town of five hundred men, three hundred and forty-seven enlisted; men like these, who had withal such a deep regard for the humanities, that they would pinch and spare to the last line of endurance, to send the children to school; Greeley's father sending four, and paying their school-wage, when he was chopping wood for fifty cents a day. Read these lines of life in this light of the long, slow sequences of earth and heaven, of generations of men and women full of the finest heroism and the sturdiest endurance, thoughtful and reverent toward whatsoever things are true, and clean and pure of life; and then you see the wonder would have been that we should not have had such noble results from these grand factors. In heaven, no doubt, one reason lies, and that the divinest; but the reason which comes home to us lies right here in this world, in the eternal law through which we can be sure that the fruit will ripen in God's good time if we are true to its slow and steadfast development. Take the man, then, of the finest genius, the purest moral worth, or the most perfect spiritual insight: he is still no miracle. He simply holds in his nature the fine distillation and sublimation of human character and conduct, ripening, for aught we know, through all the generations, since the first father fought his way through the world with a stone hammer, and his first mother sewed skins together with

sinews and a skewer, crooning some sort of rude ballad the while over her babe, and lifting her eyes to heaven when the dim light reached her of the morning of God.

This is equally true, again, of the way those do their work who are in possession of these far-reaching gifts. The poet sometimes lisps in numbers; and the preacher who is to be a great light is now and then seen on a stool, a baby boy with a baby audience: the merchant prince may drive a keen bargain with a fond mother for value given in sugar sticks, and the inventor set wheels in motion on the stream by the cottage door. But, as a wide rule, none of these things happen. The boy is apt to be a little slow and backward; and it is the other Burns, the other Scott, and the other Webster, who is to be a credit to the family. I found a farmer in Wisconsin the other day, who was a schoolboy with Charles Dickens. "And was he bright?" I said. "Could you guess what was coming?" — "Not at all," he answered: "we thought the one who died down there in Chicago was by far the brightest. Charles was taciturn, had a turn for brooding, would go away from our games, or sit and watch us, but would seldom play; and then he was no great use, and it was only when we had a little drama or recitation that we began to suspect there might be something in him." These are the hints of this far-reaching law, when "the treasures started

by generations past" come to their fruition in a human life. It is rather late, like the leafing of the great oaks; but, when they consent to tell their story, this is the sum of it, that they were slowly gathering the things of which at last they made such noble use, when it seemed as if they were living to no purpose; and the things they have done to the finest purpose are the treasures laid up through those slow days, but no more to be hurried or got at across lots than the fruit of the rare old vines or the wines we hear of in the cellars of kings. And what is all this but the fulfilling of the law? These men wist not what they were doing, very often; for genius, as a rule, is no more conscious of itself than is the rose of its sweetness, or the apple of its flavor. They were content, when they were at their best, to take their time, and let their fruit round and ripen; play no tricks, nurse no fevers, and harbor no worm, please God, in the bud of their promise; and so their fruit remains among the treasures of the race.

Now, it would be of all things strange if this law touching the greatest had no meaning when it reaches the least, and so only existed to create distinctions in our human nature as wide as those between great oaks and long-descended vines on the one hand, and mushrooms and pursley-patches on the other. We might well lose heart in such a case, and try to be content, when we feel we belong

to the lower orders, with what life could bring us between the morning and the night, clutch all the enjoyment within our reach in our brief span, and then pass away into the mists and shadows of eternity.

But this is the truth, that we are all within the circle of a great order, in which before God a thousand years is as one day. The slow certainties of heaven, through which we watch first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear, are gathered and treasured in your life and mine, transmitted to the children we raise in our homes, or inform through our spirit; and life and all things move in us also toward the ripening of the harvest of God; and all this haste and fever must be a sign of the frustration of this holy order, through which we ourselves may simply come to a swift decay, while still the world about us moves on in its ancient order. We all hold in our nature conditions of growth and ripening, we disturb at our peril through unnatural ambitions. So much we can do and be, while we hold on quietly, and work the work of Him that sent us; but once let us begin to say "This will not do: I must go ahead at any cost, make money, climb into high places, push my children to the front, or make myself a great name," and in doing any of these things wrong these quiet forces, which must have their time: then I break with the divine order, make shipwreck perhaps of

faith and a good conscience, grow sick to death at last of the whole thing, and wish it were well over.

Do you think of a fortune, then, as the most desirable thing to aim at? This is the truth about the way to make money so that it will be in any sense a blessing: it must be made by patient continuance in well-doing. There is no short cut to the wealth which stays by you: it is never made on a turn of the cards. One great reason why so many fortunes melt away so swiftly in this country is that the chance to make money by speculation, instead of making it in the old fashion by the slow and steady growth of a lifetime, has turned this whole land into a gambling-hell within the last twenty years; and there can be no solidity in such fevered gains. The worm is within them all. So the saddest thing after the wide-spread desolation which struck us in Chicago just now through a broken savings bank was this, that the offer of one per cent more interest than the rest were paying should have proved such a devil's bait. One gentleman, who employed many hands, was often consulted as to where they should put their savings. He was not prepared to answer the question, but spent some time at length looking into the matter; came to the conclusion that this bank was not safe; printed a circular, and gave it to his men, directing them what to do; and then, when the thing went to pieces, found that only three of his men had taken

his advice: the one per cent more had caught all the rest. Do you want to make a fortune? then there is but one way open. A true fortune is the result of the qualities we bring into life, and of our own conduct and character; while the latter is so great a thing, that, though we die without a dollar, we may still have made the fortune, and transmitted it to our children. A man like A. T. Stewart begins with nothing, and transmutes every thing he touches into gold. It is but the fulfilling of this law of the slow and sure growth. Those Stewarts had been striving to get ahead across the water — no man can guess how long. They gave the boy this quality; and then all he had to do was to take hold, put his life into the work, brush aside mere speculation, become the hardest-working man in New York, and, in proportion to his wealth, the most frugal; and so he reaped the harvest of the long, slow growth. Or, do you wish to push your children to the front, go slow. It is a noble ambition in its way; but the forcing process, as I have said in another chapter, is always a mistake. Keep them up to the line of this law of heaven; but do not try to force them over it. They hold in their nature the conditions of so much in so long; and you cannot, by taking thought, add one cubit to that stature.

Do you want to go to the front yourself, — to command the listening senates, or lead the world

captive by your thought, to be a great preacher, or the thirteenth man on all the juries, as Wellington said of a great pleader in his day, or able to inthrall us by your genius in some other way? do not fuss and fume about it, or complain of the long delay. If you have it in you to do any of these things, time and the slow, sure order will see to it: if not, and you are in dead earnest, still you have it in you, and the seed remains and bides its time. The singing of Robert Burns was but the ripeness of all the endeavors of his race to sing, which seemed to end where they began.

And this truth touches last of all the highest life we can live; for, as you cannot urge on the circles of the seasons, or push your life far ahead of these conditions in these things I have mentioned, so the last fine grace of a soul rounded and ripe in religion must have its long, slow season. So, while it is sad enough to hear how the short cuts they tried to take toward heaven lately in the revivals are turning out, it is no wonder. All this talk about a fitness for heaven founded on the fervid feelings of the moment, is of no more worth than the claim that the shooting blade is fit for the garner, when the fervid sun smites the earth in June. Let us have the fervid feeling, by all means, when it comes from above; but we must never forget that religion is, of all things we can think of, a long, slow growth. It is the arming of the young knight for the battle,

not the crowning of the victor, when we first feel its power. Saints are not made in a day: it takes a lifetime; and, when some of us have quietly done our best, we shall still have to cry from the far line where earth and heaven meet, "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfect," and leave it all in the assurance that, as in the lower ranges of life character and conduct get themselves stored away and ripen at last into something very noble and good, so it must be in this best thing a man can be and do. We carry with us, and leave behind us, what can never fail out of any world; but, waiting through the long seasons of God, it is sure to come to perfection in his good time. I read such a story as that of the Wesleys, for this reason, with endless interest. When we first find them they are striving after this divine life, trying to put it into books and hymns and sermons, and above all into pious lives; still they seem to make not much headway, until at last these boys come into the old parsonage with the whole wealth of all this striving in their nature, become the true liberal Christians of their day, wander over the land saying and singing the divine word, and change in time the whole religious life of England, bringing light to thousands of dark souls, and touching them to the quick for a better life. I love to read the story, because it is the key to all stories of striving through frustration, keeping close to the slow and sure law, and then at

last coming to the full ripeness; and it is the truth we all have to lay to heart. We want to be pure and good and ripe in this best ripeness. It is slow work, but it is sure. It is sure as the ripening of the fruits and the grain, and as their slow development out of wild things into the fine results we gather into our marts and fairs. Only this we must be sure about: that we keep right on, take no stock in the delusion that there is a short and easy way to this full ripeness, give no place to fever and fretting in this last best thing, we can be and do; but trust in the eternal God, who, out of just such material, by the long, slow ripening of his grace in unnumbered human lives, in the full time gave us his Christ.

October, 1877.

WORKING AND RESTING.

"Jesus loved Martha and her sister."

LUKE'S GOSPEL.

WORKING AND RESTING.

I SUPPOSE we all find out soon or late that to rest well may be as good and true a thing as to work well. And as in the course of the year the spring comes and wakes up the world into an intense activity, while the summer again brings the burden and heat of the day, and then the autumn perfects through her still, golden hours, what spring and summer have wrought; so we have all been aware, now and then, of the times in which the spirit wakes up into an energy in which we feel like doing every thing we have to do, at one stroke; but after this there is another call, just as clear, to be quiet; then, if we obey this call as we obeyed the other, we find a certain completeness has come in the stillness which could never come through the toil.

Still it is no doubt true that the time when we are most active seems to be our best estate. It is sel-

dom quite clear that we can do as good service either for God or man when we are still as when we are stirring. In this active country and time, especially, we are prone to feel that to do nothing is to be nothing. It is as if we should do nothing in the rapids of the St. Lawrence, in a boat alone. The majestic motion of the life about us overcomes us so, that the gracious word "contemplation," in the old, true sense of it, is as strange to us as Sanscrit; and we contemplate the very heavens to find out how many millions of miles the suns and stars manage to do in a day. Work while it is day, is the watchword of our age, and it seems to be always day. It is only a tradition in our life, that there was once a time when human souls could rise to a high place, and shine as the stars, while men and women sat and listened to the still, small voice. Time to us now means the time in which to work our stint; our psalm of life is "Let us, then, be up and doing;" and Christians, denouncing as infidel the suggestion that God cannot have rested on the seventh day, illustrate their own faith by never resting.

And this is no great wonder to me as I notice how easy it is to get the good and see the good of a supreme activity. Every man and woman of any worth about us has been trained to believe in the religion of work. The old battle between faith and works is about over, and faith *in* work is the

general agreement, so that real honest labor of any sort has come to be sacred, and the leathern apron of the old religion has its own sacredness among the men of to-day; and workers like George Stephenson come nearest in their minds to the modern idea of a true saint. He that worketh righteousness is righteous in the most literal sense, and the true eye and hand is our synonyme of the true heart. This is natural, again, when we notice how the worth of work impresses us, turn which way we will; and Nature and Providence are forever pushing us into it as our only true salvation. From the single flower-bed in our small garden, to the cultivation of a state; from the care of a mother about her children's garments, to the manufactures of a commonwealth; from the economy of a household to the administration of a republic; and from the teaching of a child to the education of a nation; in commerce, politics, and religion, in life everywhere, a voice seems to be crying to us, "Work out your own salvation, — work, work, work!" The flowers we left a bloom over night are threatened in the morning; the clothes, trim and bright when school calls, are a sight to see at bedtime; the pass-book at the store, left to take its own way, appalls you at the end of the month; and, while you rested from teaching your boy a good lesson, he learned a bad one. I found some wise men in Lawrence once, quite uneasy about their machinery. It was as

good as could be made yesterday, but meanwhile Fall River had started some which had to-day also in its heart; so Lawrence had to put to-day in also. Boston had been asleep only a little while, — the "North American Review" said once, — but then New York had come in like the strong man armed, and robbed her of her commerce. You let go at your peril anywhere; all things work together for good only as we all work together.

"And so man toils and cares,
And still through toil can learn great Nature's frame,
Till he can almost tame brute mischiefs,
And can touch invisible things,
And turn all warring ills to purposes of good."

Then, again, Activity whenever she appears is so handsome and taking, and has so much to say for herself compared with her sister Stillness, that she carries us captive at once, keeps us under her thrall, and will never let us draw comparisons, if she can help it, which will peril at all her claim.

To see the household crisp and clean as a new silver dollar, because the mistress can never rest with a pin out of its place, or a fly in it; and full and plenty in hall and kitchen, because the husband and father is at work every day, and all day long, with never a thought of resting; to see farms and factories shine with prosperity because those that conduct them give their days and nights and Sundays to thinking what shall be done next; to

see a church full of interested worshippers, because the minister is a tireless worker himself, and knows how to keep everybody else at work, — we understand all this easily, feel its power, and love it so well as to forget, perhaps, there can be any thing else worthy to come into comparison with its claims.

Now, I noticed in the ocean in my vacation once, the might, by contrast, of its stillness and then of its motion; how sometimes the blue waters would melt away into the blue sky, full of innocent, sweet dimples which made you feel as if the sea was laughing with content; and then again the waters would surge, and roll and leap into white foam in their passion, against the great calm cliffs. And this was what I noticed beside, — that on the still waters, and in them, rested the clear sun.

The sweetest sight I ever saw of the sea was one on Nantucket, where they told me the waters stretched clear away, without a break, to Lisbon; and they were like those John saw in his vision, "clear as crystal, like unto transparent glass;" but after this in the tumbling waters I saw only broken lights; there was a shining on the edges, but not in the deeps; a stormful grandeur and glory, but no sense of the old, quiet, winsome beauty.

And so I think there are some quiet souls which drink in the light, and mirror it, as the still sea drinks in and mirrors the sunshine, — men like

Hawthorne, who for doing things, as we understand the term, take so poor a place that they are like to starve. Hawthorne had a brain, they say, as large as Webster's; but because he had a still soul, and kept it still, there were times when he could hardly get bread for his wife and children. So I notice good, notable women, who are wonders at housekeeping, love to remember how those of their sisters who have made their mark as thinkers, are, as a rule, among the poorest housekeepers to be found; and the best preachers, we rather like to say, are the poorest pastors.

I have a friend in the ministry, a perfect battery of energy, at whose house another minister, who has taken the highest honors, lodged a month once; and the worker was so troubled at the quiet ways of his guest, that he will probably never get over it, but will still be saying, "What a shame it was for a man to lounge about as he did then!" So did the sea lounge about that day when all the sun was in its heart; so did Hawthorne lounge about in Salem. The truth is, my capital friend mistook stillness for stagnation; he ought to have reverenced what he scorned. Beautiful is the activity which works for good, and beautiful the stillness which waits for good; blessed the self-sacrifice of the one, and blessed the self-forgetfulness of the other. There are times, I think, when we should all be glad because we are quiet; when both the strong motion

and the strong emotion of existence should be over and done with for a spell, and all things be as nought to us in the presence of a pure stillness, which, like the great sea I saw, only drinks in the sun, and glasses his brightness with the whole heart.

And I doubt not this may often mean just to be still, and no more; to cast off the burdens of life for a while, and let things go very much as they will go after we are dead and gone; to conclude, if we can, that so long as we need this rest, and must have it, we will try to forget how much we are needed among the workers. This seems to have been the primitive idea of the sabbath, and of some of the Hebrew festivals. The sabbath means in the grain of it that once a week, at any rate, you shall make your way into a perfectly quiet world, in which even the food you eat shall give you no great concern: the whole good day shall be encircled, so far as possible, in stillness. It touches the ancient faith in quietness as well as in motion, in rest as well as in toil, in the still soul of us as the complement to the active, — a faith those curious modern observations verify that show how the fabrics in our factories grow poorer on Saturday and better on Monday, and every sort of toiler, tied perpetually to his task, loses wealth of life in proportion to the continuance of his labor. It is our need to give up sometimes and be still, toward which Sunday points, aside from all other sacredness. To be

still, in the simple sense of doing nothing but rejoice that we have nothing to do, may often be "a holy quiet" to overworking men.

Yet this, of course, is only the most outward and obvious thing. It is what men are ordered to do by their doctors, who neglect the advice of their ministers. The right of Nature she will never give up, but will steadily insist on, until we see by loss or gain, or both, that she must have her way. And men of business will always do well to believe that one of the most profitable investments they can make, on occasion, is positively a long lounge through a whole summer's day. I had a friend once in Michigan, who was one of those busy men cumbered with much serving weekday and Sunday, always at work, never at rest; who took the sudden and strange resolve, that he would wander away, one summer's day, into the silence, and sun his heart in it to its full content. It was toward an upland he wandered, among a nest of small lakes, with fringes of wood and wild pasture; and there he told me, away on in the afternoon, when he had drunken deep of the quietness, as he was lying with his face toward the grass, happening to lift his head, he saw, as by one flash of light, that the lines of some of these lakes ran higher than those of one he had tapped for his grist-mill. Then he saw how their waters could be used to supplement those he had in hand, tide him over the summer drought,

and give him all the aid he wanted; and when he told me the story, he had opened the way to these reservoirs, and found the plan was answering to a charm. I told him then, he would believe after this in the good of being still sometimes as a capital business investment. And now the story comes into my thought, to intimate how springs and fountains may sometimes be opened to our quietness, we clean miss in our cares. The best there is in the Bible, and the great thinkers, the poets and seers outside the Bible, will never open out into its truest worth to busy cumbered souls. We find these waters of life at their clearest in quiet days. Shakspeare, Milton, and every other sun or star of truth, must have a still soul to shine in, or one can only have such broken lights from them as I saw in the stormy sea.

My good father, who never rested until he got to heaven, used to tell me how old Mr. Murray of Leeds, who was one of the pioneers of the new industries of England, used to push aside every drawing and tool, and put his work away, when he was beaten by some problem, and go two or three days into a stillness where no man or work could come near him; and then the problem would, as it were, solve itself. So, I think, will many a perplexity solve itself when we let it entirely alone, if we are overburdened, and dwell for a space in the silence and rest. Many troubles solve themselves

when we give them this advantage, which still refuse to do it for all our striving; and every man knows how by simply taking some perplexity into that deepest of all silences, — a sound, good sleep, — and then waiting for the solution, the first thing in the morning the knot has been untied.

So I love to read these words, "Jesus loved Martha and her sister." They are sisters, but they are of these diverse kinds. Martha is full of activity, Mary of stillness. They appear three times in the Gospels, and it is always in these differing characters. Martha is hospitable and warm-hearted, ready with her tongue; and not over-careful about what she says. Mary is quiet and restful as a Quaker. Martha is cumbered about many things, entertaining her company, and seeing all goes right; but Mary sits still, careless by comparison about the way things go sometimes, if she can but sun her soul in the light. And Jesus loved them both.

And I imagine I can guess how it should be so, when I notice how the stillness which touched him is not that of mere stagnation, but that of a deep quiet soul which could only find what it wanted in this way, at this time. Mary could not bustle about and get the dinner, as her sister did; and I am not sure it would have been fit to eat if she had got it. Make what you will of it, the Marys can seldom do that as well as the Marthas. But think for one instant of what is going on in the house that day.

Here is one whose words can open the very heavens if his hearers will but stop to listen. He is saying things in those brief moments, which will live through the ages, as wheat lives, always feeding the world, and always growing to fresh harvests; but not a word does good notable Martha hear of it. The chicken and omelet and wheaten cakes fill her whole mind. It may be one of the parables he opened to them then, and never again; and twenty years after Luke comes there with an anxious face, and says to Martha, "Do you remember such a time when the Master was here?" — "Oh! very well indeed," she answers. "Then you will remember his saying something about a wild boy, who went off and came to a dreadful destitution, and then came home again; and how the Master came to say it, and just what he did say." — "Not a word of it," the active woman cries: "I had enough to think about in getting the dinner. But there's Mary, now, who would not do a thing that day, but just sit and listen, and leave me all the care and worry: she can tell, I warrant you, all about it." And Mary can tell. She has never forgotten what she heard that day; and so she calls up the great memory, and the evangelist gladly takes it down, and there is the bread which cometh down from heaven, feeding us forevermore. For this must have been the way these things were saved for us. They were taken into a few quiet souls, and treasured while the active, headlong world

about them went on too busy to care. So the active, energetic, unresting men and women do all I have claimed for them, and are entirely indispensable and perfectly invaluable, especially if now and again they can afford to stop. They push along the world up to a certain fair line ; but there is something still they cannot do, of quite an unspeakable worth. Nothing can be better, then, than to work well, and rest well, and blend both together into one life ; to be astir to the tips of the fingers and the centres of the heart and brain, and then to be still and leave it all as the finest consummation and completeness we can compass.

GOD'S POOR.

"When the Spaniard gives to the poor, he does it with uncovered head, and humbly."

HOWELL'S LETTERS, 1688.

GOD'S POOR.

I KNOW of nothing in the Bible more sweet and tender than its pleadings for the poor. They seem to be its adopted children. When there is no help for them anywhere else, its notes are good for shelter and food and fire, waiting to be honored by those who have something to spare; and, when every other current of blessing sets away from their doors, the steady stream of the pity of God in pitiful human hearts still turns that way, and flows through their kitchens and chambers as a great benediction. And while there is no doubt in these wise souls who speak to us, as to the truth that poverty may often come through the faults and failings of those who have to bear it, especially when we measure them by the standards which are just and true to our own lives, almost every word about the causes for poverty as they rest in the man himself are warnings of what is sure to come if he

does not take care, rather than reproaches when the doom has fallen, made worse by the sting of, "I told you so, and it serves you right."

In the Book of Proverbs there is a fine store of these warnings; pictures of the sluggard who leaves his bit of land neglected because he will not or can not rise with the lark, — a fault for which I have not had the heart to blame him this many a year, — of others again opening the door to meet the shrewd north-easter, cutting them like cold steel, creeping back into the warmth, and saying, "I cannot plough to-day possibly," because the thin blood in them shrank from the ordeal as we should shrink from a surgical operation; and such people are exhorted to study the ant, and see how, in the brave summer weather, he lays up his stores against the frost and snow, as if a well-bred ant was not sure to do better than the loose and shambling fragments of a man like Sam Lawson, who is born without the instinct to work, and cannot compass the will. This is all honest talk, Solomon gathers for us by the wisdom of many and the wit of one; the result, no doubt, of ages of experience and observation; and such lessons are never to be neglected, because they belong to the very underpinning of society. And Paul fitly sums them all into one terse sentence, "He that will not work, neither shall he eat."

But exactly as we find in the good old Book pity

and mercy for those who do not fulfil their contract with Heaven, and the revelation of a longing in the divine heart to lift us out of our spiritual poverty, and make us men, and as we believe, that, when there is no more hope for us in this world, the good God will not then push us down to despair any more than we should send a man from the North to New Orleans in September, who had caught the yellow fever; so it is on this earthward side with the poor and their poverty. Once sure of the bitter fact that they are destitute, then there is a spirit like that of the brooding mother-bird toward the little wretch which has wandered away from her, and got lost: no pecking or scolding is in order until the starveling is warmed and fed: these can wait, this cannot; these are penalty, this is pity. And so all the blessing the book has to give is given to those who plead the cause of the poor, and feed and help them; and not one grain, so far as I know, to those who, when they want bread, turn them away with a stony parcel of good advice.

So a man like Paul may say ever so sternly, "He that will not work, neither shall he eat;" and he will be the first man in the world to eat his own words when work is not to be found, and hunger is in the poor man's house. He knows something about hunger, and what havoc it can make in a saint, let alone a sinner who will not earn a dinner ahead in good times, and then when bad times come has to

dream of good dinners, and wake up to find the cupboard as empty as a church. So I think I see the apostle mounting guard over the small purse the churches have sent him to use as he thinks best; and how one comes to him who in good times was an easy-going good-for-nothing, but his face is thin and pinched to-day, and he hangs his head. "What do you want?" Paul says with a hard strain in his voice. "I want a little money, master, for the love of God." — "But do you not remember how I gave you work on my tents at good wages, and how you worked well for a few days, and then went away to the games, and never came back? Now see what I have written: 'he that will not work, neither shall he eat:' what do you think of that, my man?" — "I think it is all true, master, so does Mary and the children; for we have eaten nothing to-day over there in the shanty, and not much these many days: and I hated to come, but she said I must come, it was our last chance; and she said I was to ask you — What *was it* she said I was to ask you? I cannot quite remember things since we were so hungry. Ah! now I mind: to ask you if you did not tell us once how Jesus said, 'They that are whole need no physician, but they that are sick; and I am come to seek and to save that which was lost.' And then she said, 'Whatever you do, you must not forget to ask him what he thinks Jesus would have done if he had been in your place.'" Then I think Paul feels

as if he had been struck by an unseen arrow, and this is just what has happened. The angel of God's pity has sent it flying out of heaven, dipped in the tears of a mother whose children are crying for bread, and made sharp with a woman's wit. The hard strain goes out of his voice, the tears come into his eyes: he does not count the pennies very carefully, but dips his hand well down in the bag, and says, "Tell Mary I will be round, and see what can be done to set you on your feet again." And then, as the poor wretch shambles away, the old saint says to himself, "God forgive me! I meant well, but I had no idea I could be so blind to the grace which was in Christ Jesus."

There is a man to be met with far and wide, who can quote these words, "He that will not work, neither shall he eat," and make them good to his own mind. It is the man who wants to feel sure he has the Bible to back him when he turns away from a fellow-man in want and misery, and yet feels uneasy at what he has done, because there are hiding-places in his heart in which, if you could break the shell, you would find crumbs of a sweet compassion, like the kernel in a hickory-nut grown on poor land. It is a great thing for such an one to be able to fall back on the Bible: he can cite Heaven then, in the face of its own pity, and persuade himself it would be a sin to go against so clear a revelation; and his Bible

opens to such passages as naturally and easily as a maiden's prayer-book opens to the wedding-service. There is another man, who, when he finds dire and desperate need, neither considers the strict measure of his own ability, nor of the starving man's deserving. He has the heart in him of the great Frenchman who was hungry to agony once in the Revolution, and made a vow that no man should ever suffer again so woefully if he could prevent it; or of the old squire in our town among the moors, who had never known what it was to want, but when the poor Irish came swarming over after the potato-rot, hungry as wolves in winter, but with no great mind for work, thought first, I suppose, of the pity of God, then of their nature and training, and this hunger which had robbed them of the last shred of self-respect; and used to order his steward to kill a beef now and then, which with meal and milk and their vanished potatoes, and no end of good advice on a full stomach, set them up in some poor way, and started them afresh. He was a Catholic, the Frenchman was what we call an infidel: they were both God's almoners, and brothers so far of Jesus Christ.

For, while it must be true that one of the worst things we can do for a man is to build up his mendicancy on our charity, the question, What can we do for the poor? must still turn in some way on what has been left undone when they come on our

hands. So when I notice that about the last man in the world to come begging to my door is a Scotchman or one of the northern Irish, while the great majority of beggars are from the south and west of Ireland, I have to seek a reason for this fact away down in the depths of our common nature; and while something may well be charged to the misgovernment of England, to the influence of a church which helps to create mendicants perhaps through its over-praise of alms-giving, and, above all, through whiskey, the baleful mother of so much misery and crime, the deeper reason must still lie in a certain inbred poverty of nature, — a backward or retarded development ten thousand years behind that of the yellow-haired, blue-eyed, great-limbed fellows who swept into the circle of civilization from the North, and have carried all before them in the long hard fight for the first place. For what we are compelled to observe in races is true of men. You could not, and I could not, take a much lower place than this we stand on to-day. The eager hunger to be about as far along as we are was in our nature when we first took hold of life; and as the song soars in the lark, and then the lark soars, so this whole upward march has been on the line of our will, our ambition, and our delight. The spears of fate and fortune have all lain with their points slanting upward as we climbed the steep, and have only risen to threaten or stab us

when we turned about, and tried to head down. But suppose they had slanted the other way, as they do for so many; that the way down had been easy, and the way up hard; suppose this ambition and delight in rising had been left out of our nature, and instead of this we had found a careless, easy-going quality, sown with the seeds of evil appetites from a former generation: would not such a fact as this alter the standard of judgment before the great white throne? And so may not the Judge of all the earth be saying to you and me, "You are not half so good as you think you are; neither are these who have never had your nature or your opportunity to be weighed against you in the scales"? "O master!" one of these poor folk said once to a gentleman, "if you only knew how lazy I am, I think you would give me a shilling;" and the very impudence of the man, as I have heard, drew the coin. But was that only impudence? I think it may have been a truth so simple and sincere that he could have told it to God as we tell our sorrows and confess our sins.

We can never begin to understand these poor, then, as we should, until we see how much less of merit there is in our better estate, and of demerit in theirs, than we commonly imagine. These things we have done to win our better place are but the shadows of what Nature and Providence have done for us in our birth and breeding. So I say without

hesitation that by grace we are saved through faith from sending our children to back-doors, picking up cold scraps.

Still one must not push the principle over the line of a fair judgment. If we make this truth of a radical difference in nature, the reason for giving right and left, not trying to find out what better thing we can do than to give alms of all we possess, we can easily and we shall surely aggravate the evil we seek to assuage.

The first thing we must do, indeed, to help a starving man, is to give him food and fire; once sure that this is his condition, here is our first duty; we might as well talk to the Great Pyramid as to a man fainting with hunger, before we feed him, about trying to take care of himself. But this once well done, we are bound, if we can do it, to find out whether the man has lost the battle of life, or was never really fit to fight it, or whether he is one of this ever-growing number who set themselves to cheat our sympathies, pick our pockets, and close up the way to those who are on any account deserving our utmost compassion.

A good friend of mine was caught by one of these rascals once, who came to him in the guise of a reformed drunkard, or rather one who could be sure of himself if he once had ten dollars to start him in life. He got the money, went his way, and was back in a month with the old story. The kind

good heart was still open to him, and the purse. How much he got, first and last, no man knows; but at last the rogue lost his bearings, went one day, and said in the cheeriest way you can imagine, "Doctor, I have fallen again;" and then he had to get out of the house quick, driven by that mighty anger we read of as the wrath of the Lamb, and was never seen again. Now, we cannot deal with wickedness as we deal with weakness, and that man was a common thief, who had not the courage to run his risk by picking pockets in the ordinary way; and we can give no quarter to this sort of rogue, because he not only robs us, but at the same time he robs those needing our help, who are in some poor way worthy. These are not those who are born with a fatal weakness of the marrow or the brain, which leaves them stranded, or with passions which master all the principle they ever had, or who have fallen on misfortune, and can never get on their feet again except we lend them at least a finger; who cry to us to help them, the poor, over whom the angel of pity spreads his wide wings as he whispers to those about them, "What are you going to do for these poor children of God?"

Something we can all do in the most dismal times. There is not a man of us who is not as rich as the Astors in comparison with some poor fellow we know of always at the edge of winter, or some widow, shrinking back in shame as she tries to

muster courage to see the poormaster. We can take hold of such destitute folk just where we find them, not asking over-eagerly as to where the money went they ought to have made when times were better, perhaps; and, instead of giving them the scraps from our table, take a little thought about putting what we do into a good shape, so that our gift may be robbed of the woeful look it must take on without such a tender touch. And then if with this we will make up our minds to get at the secret of their poverty, and try to find a sure remedy for that, giving them the chance all the time to do something in return, which may save what crumb of pride there is still in their nature, adorning our endeavor all the while with a genuine sympathy as to a poor brother, — we shall have done something to answer the angels who will be haunting our warm rooms, and looking at our well-spread tables.

A CAROL WITH A CAUTION.

Each age has deemed the new-born year
The fittest time for festal cheer. . . .
And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.

Scott.

A CAROL WITH A CAUTION.

THE things we do at Christmas are touched with a certain grain of extravagance, as beautiful in some of its aspects as the extravagance of nature in June.

It is the children's carnival, the midsummer of charity to the poor, the spring-tide of good-will to men; the time of the year when heaven opens, and the angels come down and sing to sailors on the ocean, to old-country folks in the lone reaches of new colonies, to people in hospitals, poor-houses, and mansions, and "the huts where poor men lie;" the time when the atmosphere is just right for clear-burning fires, and it would be something of a shame for the wind to send the smoke down any chimney as it does a week before or after; when there is a goodly smell abroad, as if the frankincense the wise men brought on a day long ago, to temper the taint of a stable, had got into this whole

world of ours, as a trailing cloud of the odors of spiced bread; when the poorest platters and mugs take a touch of fine recklessness by reason of the thoughtfulness of those who have bread enough and to spare; when the Christmas-tree groans all radiant and fruitful, as no other tree does which blooms through the year; for it bears at least twelve manner of fruit, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

I would not, therefore, insult Christmas by underdoing it. The man who then does most for his fellow-men, according to his means, does best. We can give the tramp who comes to our back door, a royal cup of coffee Christmas morning, with a good grace, though we have to see that he does not run off with the spoon. (Our people in that case, I notice, use pewter.) They are wide pages the angel opens in the book of life at Christmas; and when we do our best, we cannot do it quicker than he can write it down.

Still I think it is not hard to see how we may spare, even at the Christmas-tide, and yet do more and better than if we spend.

If a man spends the money he ought to save to pay his debts, when he knows very well he can only pay his debts by saving, he may give what he buys, right and left with an open hand, and it will be to his own shame.

I have never digested one of the best suppers I

ever sat down to in my life, though it is years since I ate it, because, as it came out after, my host owed for it at the store, and the debt was never paid. I don't want any more of those suppers. There are millions of dollars spent every Christmas, of other men's money. Not a penny ought to be laid out in gifts one can well let alone. Men who do that get drunk on their generosity, though they never taste of wine; and, if they are men of conscience, the headache and heartache of getting sober will be none the less for their motive in getting drunk.

We should never spend when we ought to spare, especially if we have families. One of the saddest things I have struck in my life has been the sight of families left destitute, through a certain easy-going generosity in the man out of whose life they sprang, who would have every thing of the best, trusting to his luck to come out all right; who would spare nothing at Christmas-time, or any other time, so that he might have things handsome, while he did not lay up a dollar for a rainy day or for that instant peril of death which dogs all our footsteps between the cradle and the grave. Saving is so slow to such men, and so hard! But they do not remember that a hundred dollars a year, paid to a sound life insurance company, on a healthy life of a certain age, is five thousand dollars if the stroke comes a day after the investment, and

that the premium on ten thousand dollars, or even twenty thousand dollars, may be only the savings from cigars, or "nips" or rides they need not take, or a score of things beside men and women can manage to dispense with just as well as not, including the over-extravagance of the Christmas carnival.

I can say this for myself, that from the day when I got as much insurance as made me feel sure that, whatever might happen, my old neighbors and friends would never have to say, "Poor fellow! he was too generous with his money: let us pass round the hat for his family," the poison for me has been taken out of the sting of death. "O death! where is thy sting?" the apostle cries. I answer, that to a well-bred man of our serious, home-loving race, it is more surely in that intolerable pain he feels when he kisses his wife and children the last time, and knows he has made no provision for their future, than it is in any possible fear of what death may do to him. And I should not take much stock in that man who would not close instantly with the proposal of a decent competence for the wife and children, in exchange for the open gates of heaven, and the angels waiting with a crown, if he had the chance.

"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out," the sad old Hebrew cries. I answer, Surely, surely, if you mean mere *things;* but somewhere within me, when I go

away, I carry the account of what I have done to fend for those I leave behind me, and save them from the bitter pangs of poverty, by my forethought, self-denial, and clear grit, from the day when I took a maid from her mother, and said, "Trust me to take care of you, whatever comes, to be a house-bond to you and the children God may give us;" yes, even by pushing back Christmas, if we have to do it, and letting the bairns rise to find empty stockings these hard times. Better empty stockings to-day than the bitter, bare winter of poverty if I should be taken from them. I can easily imagine how a man would be glad to exchange his golden harp and crown, if he could, for good six per cent stock, if he should find himself in heaven — supposing a man could go there, when, through his own carelessness, he has left a wife and family of little children without a penny in the world.

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